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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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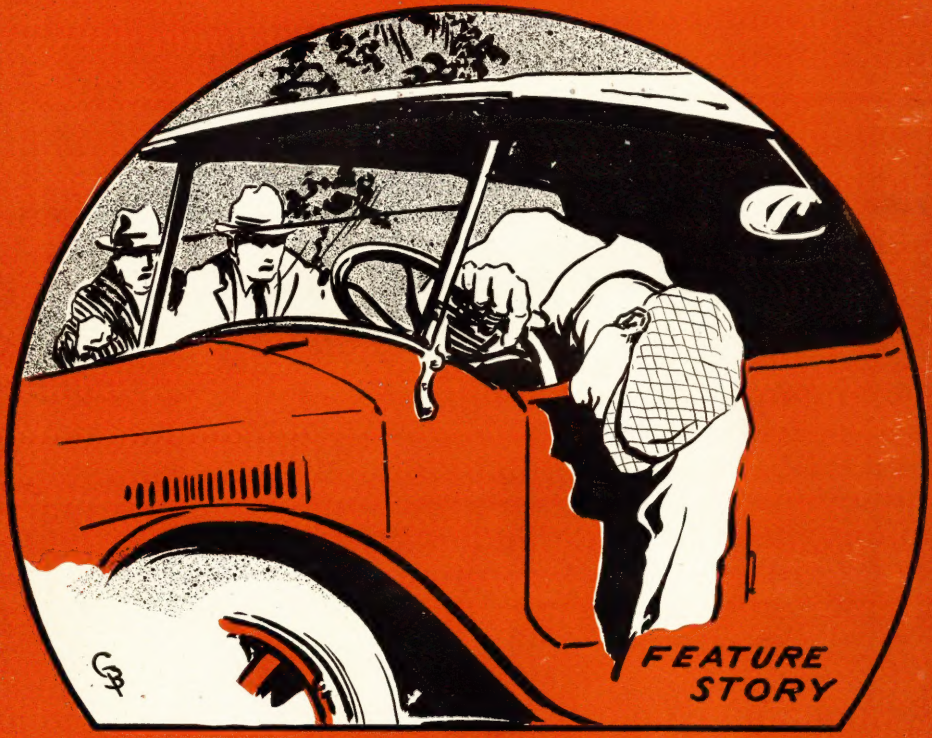

A SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE

by DONALD GEORGE McDONALD

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. V. SEPTEMBER 15, 1922 No. 117

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About Our Next Number

JACK BECHDOLT is author of the feature story we are going to publish in our next number. Title of it is "Number Nine Queer Street." We can honestly promise you a rare treat in this novelette, for it contains that gripping quality so hard to find in the average story. The narrative is pleasant, the incidents interesting, and the ending will surprise you as the plot turns out different from what you expect. We strongly urge our friends to read this story for an hour's solid enjoyment.

The short stories are very good. For instance, "The Lavender Toque," written by Edward F. Medosch, is a detective story that will arouse your curiosity, grasp your interest and keep you in suspense till you finish it. Edgar Daniel Kramer contributes "Son of Judas," a mighty fine yarn of the underworld that remains vividly impressed on your mind long after you have read it. The story contains a wonderful play on human emotions that will surely please any one who reads this sketch. There will be a detective story entitled "The Tragedy" from Katherine Stagg. It is one of the best ever written by this talented authoress, and we will have an odd story from Bayard Yadon called "The Greater Duty," showing how a female detective saved a man on the brink of ruin. There will be a very good collection of short sketches, the serial story and no end of brief items on the usual variety of subjects.

A critical examination of the next issue shows that our readers are going to get more for their money than any similar publication gives, and we are quite sure you will be thoroughly satisfied.

We have received a great many letters from all over the country praising our snappy little magazine, and we wish to take this means of thanking our numerous well wishers for their kind words and loyal support. The more we increase our circulation the better we will be enabled to give you an improved magazine. We therefore request our readers to recommend it to their friends and acquaintances. We intend to add to the attractiveness of "Mystery" as fast as possible, and you will get the benefit of it. Watch us grow!

THE EDITOR.

A Scientific Detective

by

Donald George McDonald

CHAPTER ONE

THE chain of incidents which were to lead to such a startling and terrifying conclusion began one afternoon in the middle of a scorching summer.

The winter and spring had been hard on me and worn my health to that point my physician had told me was the danger line. It was therefore with a great feeling of relief that I left my new partner in charge of the office and took myself off to a delightful resort situated on one of the upper lakes. No man's system can withstand the cure that nature provides in these regions. The sluggish circulation, the vitiated nerves began to swing back to normal, and with the approach of old-time health there came a new reason for being alive. Flora West was her name. She and her mother were stopping at the hotel, and though I had had but a speaking acquaintance with her for three days she had thrown a strange and glorious spell over every waking minute.

On the afternoon of which I speak I was lying rather than sitting in a steamer chair. My feet were propped up on the veranda railing, my hat was pulled down over my eyes, and I was putting up a gallant but unsuccessful struggle to keep cool. Most of the guests were away; some down on the beach where they could legally discard more clothes than I could while sitting on the porch; others had strolled off into the grove that lay back of the hotel.

Sitting some fifteen feet from me, on my right hand, sat a gentleman, the only other occupant of a chair on that side of the porch. I had seen him at supper the night before. As a matter of fact I believe that every one in the dining-room had seen him as his giant frame, some six feet six in height, came swinging along between the rows of tables. During the course of the meal I had occasionally glanced in his direction, and each time I had noticed that he was tending strictly to business, apparently taking little interest in a man of his strikingly handsome appearance. He had a great mass of wavy hair—a delicate auburn shade. His forehead was extremely high and receding, his nose rather long but well-formed, his chin and jaw exquisitely chiseled.

As I studied the man as he sat on the porch that afternoon the thought came to me that here was a gentleman worth knowing. I decided to try and win his acquaintance at least, his friendship if possible. At first I thought he must be working on some report, but this impression was corrected when a turn of his

hand showed the paper he held to be a leaf from a letter written in longhand. In the other hand he held a pencil and occasionally jotted down some notation on a piece of paper that rested on the arm of his chair. My next thought, that he was making notes from a letter sent him by his business house, also proved to be an error, for he wrote steadily, and every now and then held the letter sheet within six or seven inches of his eyes, apparently studying some one spot most carefully.

Presently he withdrew from his coat pocket a great handful of other letters. Sorting them through, he withdrew one, extracted one of the sheets from the body of the note, and once more continued his elaborate, painstaking notations.

I am either blessed or cursed with an inordinate curiosity. Certainly it was none of my business, but after watching this gentleman for three-quarters of an hour I found myself possessed by a tremendous desire to know his business and what it was that was so closely occupying his attention.

I had been lying with my hat drawn down as a shield to my eyes. Very likely the man had thought me asleep if he had even noticed my presence. Slowly I stirred in my chair, like a man rousing from a deep slumber. I stretched, I yawned, I tilted my hat to the back of my head and sat upright. My movements had apparently passed unnoticed, so I cleared my throat.

"Whew! Gosh, but it's hot!" I said.

No reply or indication that he had heard.

"I say, stranger, don't you find it too infernally hot to work?"

Still no reply. He was using a small thing that looked like a magnifying-glass on a section of the letter in his hand.

Feeling rather foolish and chagrined, I once more lay back in my chair. Possibly the fellow was deaf. That would explain his apparent lack of desire to converse which I had noticed in the dining-room the night before. I resigned myself to solitude, and had just decided to make a genuine effort to find sleep in the intense heat of mid-afternoon, when a deep, well-modulated voice at my right said:

"Yes, it's hot enough, but when a man's interested in his work he doesn't notice trifling inconveniences."

Once more I sat up. I was just about to apologize for my interruption when the speaker continued:

"This work, which you have been watching me do with such very apparent interest, is to me not only my bread and butter, but the most fascinating work on earth, as I am a detective." The stranger stacked all the letters and replaced them in his pocket. He turned his chair a bit more in my direction, produced a charred brier pipe, filled it, lighted it, and after two or three immense puffs said: "It is apparent that you have an unusually large amount of curiosity. I have no doubt that you are fairly consuming at this moment to know the nature of the work I have just finished."

I was astonished. "Well!" I said. "Yes, I am curious—tremendously so, always have been, but what beats me is how you ever knew it. I admit I have been watching you this afternoon, and I apologize for my rudeness, but I was totally unaware that I made my interest so apparent."

"You didn't. You handled the matter very cleverly, but just the same you couldn't help showing it. You might have been talking with a friend about music or paintings, two things you love, but even while your mind was thus occupied I could have told, with a very great degree of certainty, that you were curious." He paused for a moment to relight his pipe. When he had it burning well he continued. "You see, the study of folks is part of my detective business, and this little bit of character analysis is something I have taken up quite recently, believing it to be a great help to that business. I use two methods in analyzing: one by the handwriting of the person involved, the other by the careful study of their features and general appearance. The technical names are graphology and physiognomy."

"Do you believe such observations are accurate?" I asked.

"Unquestionably. The individual character is plainly stamped on the face and betrayed in the handwriting. If in the course of years a person's character undergoes a change, the face and penmanship of that person change accordingly. It is really very easy to test. I should be happy to give you a bit of proof. Have you any letter in your pocket you would care to have me examine?"

It happened that I had in my pocket at that time a letter written six months ago by a man who had died two days after he penned it. I knew that man better than I have ever known any one on this earth. I started to pass the note to the stranger, but he held up his hand.

"No, please, not the entire letter—just a page, preferably the last page. You may fold the signature underneath so that I may have no clue as to the identity of the person. Now, one question, Mr.——"

"Sumner," I supplied, "Aaron Sumner."

"And mine is Dan Scott."

We shook hands, then the detective continued:

"I was about to ask if you want a complete criticism of this handwriting, or would you prefer that I omit anything that might be unpleasant to you coming from the lips of a stranger?"

"Tell me everything," I said. "I will be greatly interested."

After three or four minutes of intense study Mr. Scott spoke.

"It is a very interesting specimen. May I ask if the party who wrote it is still living?"

"Died about six months ago," I said, and I wondered if he heard the slight choke in my voice as I said the words, for the memory of the man was still clear in my mind, and his passing away had been a very great blow to me.

"It is probably for the best that he died. Heart failure, wasn't it? Had had a weak heart for some time, no doubt."

I nodded.

"How long before his death did his mind begin to fail?"

"Six or seven months," I said, marveling at the accuracy of the analysis. "How in the world did you detect insanity? Surely not in the phraseology of the note itself."

"I never 'read' any specimen I examine. The marks of insanity are here in the writing itself. I find some very interesting things in this case. This man was extremely religious, inclined to be a bit narrow in his views on this subject, and coupled with this he was extremely obstinate. He was evidently childlike in his trust, not only in God, but in humans with whom he came in contact and who won his love. This trait is indeed so marked, so pronounced that I should say he might easily have been duped. In frankness he was like a child—perfectly outspoken, and this no doubt won him many enemies. If he was in business he was not particularly successful as a business man, for he was intended for art, music or writing, using any of these three to give expression to the religion which was so much a part of his nature."

Detective Scott paused at this point. Suddenly he turned to me.

"Did it ever occur to you that this man might have been driven into insanity through worry—worry caused by misplaced confidence in some one who tricked him?"

The thought startled me. "No," I said. "I had never thought of it in that light. As a matter of fact I should not consider it possible."

"It was entirely possible," said Mr. Scott. "The thing that is debatable is whether or not it was probable."

"I do not think so," I replied. "The man whose handwriting you are analyzing was my father."

"Indeed," replied my friend; "then you are most certainly in a position to know very definitely all the reasons and facts of his death. I merely advanced the hypothesis because I believed it to have been possible. I still believe it to have been possible, but I will not press the point." He paused and looked at me for a moment. "I presume, of course, you were with your father at the time of his taking off?"

"No," I replied. "I arrived from France in time for the funeral. For ten years previous to that time I had not seen or corresponded with my father." I paused, wondering whether or not to reveal some of the unfortunate past to this comparative stranger.

"Pray continue, Mr. Sumner. Unless it is extremely distasteful to you I should be greatly interested in hearing more of the case. It is just possible I——" He stopped abruptly. "Won't you have a cigar?"

I accepted one from his case. "Thank you," I said. "I will tell you all I know, though the whole thing is very painful to me.

"You have said that my father's handwriting told you that he was not a business man;

that he should have been an artist, a musician or a writer. That is true, and I inherited from him the same tastes and possibly talents.

When I was twenty-one years of age I left the university I attended to go on the stage. I loved the stage. I dreamt the stage in my sleep and lived it in my waking hours. I wanted to be an actor more than any other thing on earth. I was determined that nothing or no one should stop me from my purpose.

"Coupled with my desire to be an actor was another longing, quite as intense, to go to France and start my career there. I had French blood in my veins, inherited from my mother, who came from one of the noblest families in the city of Le Mans. I spoke the language fluently and was entirely confident that I would be successful in my undertaking.

"I left the university and came home to tell my father of my plans. It was a terrible scene. I thought at the time that father would be insane in his fearful passion. All his religious nature, which you so accurately pictured, fought my plan. He declared the stage to be the breeder of degenerates. He painted France as a nation where sin was rampant, where honesty and purity and godliness were never thought of, where men and women were ruled by everything that was loathsome and unclean. He finished by ordering me from the house when I persisted in my course, and declared that he would try to absolutely forget that he ever had a soon who could so dishonor him.

"My father at that time was in the real-estate business. He was handling the work alone, but at various times while I was at college he had written me that he thought it best to take on a partner—some man more gifted than himself in business ability.

"As I have said, in the ten years that I was in France I never heard from my father, and he was the only living relative I had. We were alone in the world—we two—and yet he had cast me off. The first word I had from America came from the hospital authorities, who cabled me that he was dying. Evidently he relented at the last, and asked them to summon me.

"On my arrival I learned that he had been seriously ill for but three days, and the doctors were unable to satisfactorily explain the illness. I learned from my father's partner, who had been with him for seven years, that Mr. Sumner had been very erratic and subject to fits of deep melancholy for the past six months. My arrival was the first indication the partner, Mr. Davis, had had that there was a son in existence.

"My father had drawn two wills, one in nineteen fourteen, leaving all his property and business to Mr. Davis and a later will, drawn a year before his death, while he was in sound mind, leaving everything to me.

"Respecting and honoring Mr. Davis, both in a business way and personally, I continued the business with him as my partner. Further, I needed some one to give me an insight to the real-estate game. We started our business three months ago, and the tremendous amount of detail and the nervous drain exacted on me through entering a line of work that was unfamiliar to me brought me up here in the delightful climate of these upper lakes to rest and relax."

Throughout my recital of the facts Mr. Scott had remained silent. Now that I had finished he continued smoking, occasionally tapping his long, tapering fingers on the arm of his chair. For all of five minutes he sat thus, then he turned and regarded me out of deep brown eyes that seemed to be looking straight through me.

"How has the business been going while you have been up here?"

"First rate," I replied. "My partner writes me every day. This morning's letter from him tells me that he has two big deals in prospect. I have every confidence in his ability. Incidentally," I continued, "I, with my unpracticed eye, should say that there is a lot of character revealed in his handwriting." I withdrew the letter I had received that morning and held it out towards Mr. Scott. He did not take it, and barely glanced at it; then abruptly he arose.

"Think over my hypothesis as to your father's death. Really I should hardly venture to say that it was—improbable."

The detective strode away, and I did not meet him for a long time afterward. But he was destined to play an important part in the greatest event of my life.

CHAPTER TWO

FOR another hour I sat on the porch, striving to bring my disordered thoughts into some proper arrangement, but to no avail. A touch of horror passed through me as I recalled the fact that my father's last illness had not been explained by the doctors at the hospital. I resolved to see these men and my father's nurse immediately upon my return to the city. Possibly they would be able to throw more light on the manner of his death.

At length, tiring of the strain my thoughts had brought upon my emotions, I left the hotel to stroll down on the beach and if possible find one whom I knew could banish unpleasant thoughts and memories. She was there, on the sands, with her mother, who hastily withdrew despite my protestations.

For a half-hour we sat together, talking about the latest books, the people we knew, the glories of life on the upper lakes and many of the likes and dislikes we seemed to hold in common. Our conversation was broken by long moments of silence, when only the lap, lap, of the waves on the sandy beach broke the delightful serenity of the hour. These moments of silence only served to bind our friendship the closer. It is always so. Hearts that beat in unison do not need words to give expression to the thoughts and feelings that lie deep within.

We were sitting quite apart from the crowd of bathers. I was glad this was so, for I wanted to say something to Flora that was not intended to be said where others could overhear.

Her head was bowed, the wonderful auburn hair waving in the breeze which had recently sprung up. Her fingers were searching the sands for bits of gaily colored shell which lay in such profusion about us. My heart grew very warm within me at the lovely sight this beautiful creature presented and the knowledge that I was about to ask her a question I had never before asked of any woman. I put out my hand and stopped the fingers in their active search. "Flora," I whispered.

Slowly the head raised, the hazel eyes met mine, frankly and squarely. There was a suspicious moisture about the lids which she made no effort to remove.

"Flora," I said, "I—I have something to ask you; something so great and wonderful that I can scarce find the words to say it. Perhaps—perhaps you can look into my face and find the question there. It ought to be written there—plainly. God knows I have thought of it enough, hopefully and fearfully. Hopefully because your answer may be 'Yes,' fearfully because—because you may say 'No.'"

I could see her breathing become more rapid. Something of fright, something of sorrow and, thank heaven, something of love shone in her eyes. Her lips trembled. "I—know," she barely whispered, then in brief moment, "but do not ask me!"

Mankind has some instinct that prompts him to scent danger and things terrifying even though there be nothing really tangible to warrant his suspicion. For the first time in my life I sensed a lurking, imminent danger. Something prompted me to press the matter no further, so I smiled reassuringly at the girl and patted her hand. "Very well," I said, "not now, but another time very soon."

She smiled at me and arose. A swift rush of wind caught her unexpectedly, and she would have fallen had I not caught her. In my interest I had failed to note the rapidly approaching storm, and now the giant black clouds were sweeping across the sky. Daylight was darkening into premature night. A glance over the beach showed it to be utterly deserted save for ourselves. I put my arm about Flora, and together we fought our way towards the hotel with the wind directly against us.

It grew dark, utterly dark, so swiftly that ere we had advanced a hundred feet the hotel loomed like a giant in the night. Lights in the rooms were being rapidly turned on, and toward them we fought our way, step by step.

Suddenly, without warning, something pushed, rather than struck me, in the back, and I plunged headlong into the sand. I was on my feet in an instant, looking swiftly about to determine from what or whom the blow had come. Was it imagination or did I really see what seemed to be the black mass of a running figure vanish into the obscurity of the storm. I hastened to Flora's side and put my arm about her waist to steady her, for she was trembling violently.

"Flora," I cried, endeavoring to make my-

self heard through the whip of the storm, "who was that?"

Perhaps she tried to answer, but I could not hear the words. She seemed to be holding something in one hand, though what it was I could not distinguish. We were approaching the light from the hotel now, and whatever it was she held Flora stuffed it in the pocket of her skirt. Through my brain wild thoughts ran riot. Once again, for the second time that day, my curiosity was at a white heat. Did the object Flora held have any connection with the person or thing that had pushed me into the sand? If so, what was the connection? My question was not to be answered, for upon gaining the hotel Flora excused herself immediately and hurried to her room.

For some time I sat in the lobby near the door, searching the faces of those who entered. They were all unfamiliar, and at length, tired, wet through and through and intensely worried, I sought my own room to wash and dress for supper.

At the meal that evening I watched for my new acquaintance, but he failed to come. Flora was not in the dining-room, though her mother was there. As I was leaving the hall I stepped to the table where the lady was sitting.

"Your daughter," I asked, "how is she after the unfortunate experience this afternoon?"

"Which exper—— What do you mean?"

"Had you not heard that I was with her when we were overtaken by the storm? We had to put up a stiff battle to get back."

"Oh, yes—yes indeed," she said hastily. "That was too bad. Poor Flora seems terribly upset over it, and simply would not come down to the dining-room for supper, though I told her it would do her a great deal of good and brighten her up."

I searched the woman's face, trying to discover if she knew of the extraordinary thing that had occurred, but I could discover no indication that she knew save the words "Which experience?" that she had uttered, apparently thoughtlessly, when I had first questioned her.

"After a good night's sleep I am sure she'll be much better," I remarked, then bowed and passed on.

It was perhaps nine o'clock that evening when one of the bellboys found me as I sat on the porch smoking a cigar. It was raining, but not violently—just a steady, soaking downpour.

"Mr. Sumner," called the boy. "Note for Mr. Sumner."

"Here, boy," I said.

As the messenger put the note in my hand he said:

"Better hurry, sir, and read it. The lady seemed very anxious."

"Who gave it to you?"

"A lady in room 704."

The boy sped away and nervously I tore open the envelope.

"Come to me at once. MRS. WEST."

A moment later I was knocking on the door of 704. It was opened by the mother, who, the moment she saw me, seized me by the arm and hurried me into the room.

"What is the trouble?" I cried, alarmed at the expression on the woman's face.

"Flora—she is gone!"

"Gone? Gone—where?"

"Heaven knows, sir. I returned to my room but three minutes ago, after having played a game of cards downstairs, and found my daughter gone."

The woman's lips trembled.

"But surely no harm has come to her. She has probably stepped out for a few minutes to play cards herself or talk with some of her friends in the hotel."

"No," said the woman huskily. "No, she has gone; her bag, her clothes, her money—they are gone, too."

"Did she leave no note?" I asked.

"I don't think so, though I have not had time enough to search."

"Then come, let us see what we can find." I threw my hat on a chair and immediately started to look about. "Her bedroom," I said, "let us start there."

For about two minutes we searched everywhere; then just as we were about to leave I stooped down and cast a hurried glance under the bed. Far over in the corner I saw a small object. Pulling the bed out from the wall, I reached behind and picked it up. It was a large shell or piece of shell, cone-shaped. Stepping to the electric light, I started to exam-

ine it, when I suddenly discovered something which looked like a mass of tiny scraps of paper pressed down into the small opening. With the aid of a hairpin I carefully pulled the pieces out onto a piece of paper from my pocket.

Working as swiftly as possible I tried to put the scraps together, but after five minutes of agonizing endeavor I turned to the mother.

"It is impossible to get these in readable shape right now. From what little I have been able to gather it is a message written in code of some sort. The thing I propose to do at once is to hire an auto and start in pursuit. Some one may have seen her or those who took her away. I will come to you as soon as I get back."

Slipping the shell and the torn note into my pocket, I left the room.

I hastened up to the clerk.

"Did Miss West of room 704 hire an auto this evening?"

"Yes," he replied.

"How long ago?"

"'Bout half an hour, I guess. Why? Anything happened?"

"Don't know yet. Get me a car—quick!"

After five more precious minutes had elapsed I jumped in a closed car and ordered the driver to race the fifteen miles to the railroad station.

"I'll hop her as much as I can, but this is a dangerous night to let her out. Roads are bad."

"Damn the roads," I cried. "You step on her."

For five miles we skidded and slipped and bumped along at a pace which threatened to end disastrously; then we reached a point where the road led through some four miles of timber. The roads were better here, but the darkness was so intense, and the driver was forced to make so many abrupt turns, that he had to cut down the speed.

"Isn't that old mill somewhere in through here?" I shouted through the tube.

I could see the driver nod in the affirmative.

"Slow down," I ordered. I was acting purely on impulse.

After ten minutes of moderate driving I felt the brakes clamp on, and our car came to a sudden stop.

"What's the matter?" I called.

For answer the man pointed ahead of us, and there, dimly outlined by the headlights on our car, I saw an auto standing and blocking our passage. I jumped out.

"Are you armed?" I asked the fellow.

"No. Why should I be, and what the devil is your game, anyway?"

"My game," I replied, "is to help a woman. Some deviltry is on foot against her, and I am trying to stop it. Will you walk up to that car with me?"

Grudgingly the man consented. We walked carefully but quickly.

"See," I said, pointing to a section of the road which was illuminated by the lights of our car, "there have been two autos here, probably the one up ahead and some other, which likely was in pursuit."

Presently we reached the side of the car which had blocked our path. I put my fingers to my lips to indicate silence to my companion, and stealthily we raised from the stooping posture we had maintained until our eyes were on a level with the windows.

In the driver's seat sat a man, his head bowed, his body lurched forward over the wheel. My companion and I entered the car and made a hurried examination of the fellow's injuries. He was still breathing, and a deep wound, made with some heavy instrument, gaped over one eye. I bound a clean handkerchief about the man's head, then turned to my companion.

"The girl is somewhere near at hand, I am sure."

"Perhaps in the old mill," he volunteered.

"How far is that?"

"'Bout a quarter of a mile, straight through yonder," said my driver, pointing into a particularly dense bit of forest.

"All right then; no time to lose. You game to go with me?"

"Surest thing you know."

CHAPTER THREE

SURROUNDED by a dense growth of trees and underbrush, situated on the banks of a stream which had long ago ceased to function as a millrace, stood the old building. We

approached it from the rear, and used extreme caution, crouching low and moving forward a bit, then stopping to listen. All was profound silence, save for the noise of the rain as it descended upon the tree-tops above our heads.

"Spooky, ain't it?" remarked my aid.

"Shh," I said, "or we'll join the spooks."

There was a small window at the back of the mill, but it had been boarded up, so we found ourselves obliged to go around to the front of the building. Once there, I paused with my hand on the door, while I leaned forward until my lips touched my companion's ear. "Watch yourself!" I pushed gently on the latch. It yielded. Inch by inch I pushed the door open until, using extreme care, I was able to enter. When both of us were inside we stood motionless.

From somewhere, out of the inky blackness which no human eyes could possibly pierce, there came a faint sound. It might have been the squeak of a rat or a mouse, but there was something about the sound strangely suggestive of a human's cry stifled suddenly. I gripped the arm of the man beside me. An answering squeeze of his hand on my wrist told me that he had heard. I started to move ahead when all at once I heard a sound that chilled my blood. It was the scrape of a foot on the floor. Somebody was in the room with us!

I could feel the muscles in my companion's arm stiffen. As for myself, I was all braced and on the qui vive, ready to spring or dodge. It must have been that we stood absolutely motionless for five full minutes. I had just about decided to light one of the matches in my pocket when a great black shadow suddenly appeared in front of me. Putting all the strength I possessed behind the blow, I struck out with all my might. I had a hazy feeling of my fist coming in contact with something extremely hard, when almost simultaneously a roar like Niagara sounded in my ears, my senses swam, and then came the peace of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER FOUR

THERE were voices around me—a confused murmur, nothing clearly distinguishable. It seemed hours before I gained both the courage and possibly the strength to open my eyes, but when I did I found myself in my own room at the hotel. A familiar face bent over me, and when my eyes opened a sigh of relief escaped the lips. It was Mrs. West. Feebly I raised my hand to hers, which was waiting to receive it.

"Flora," I murmured. "Is she safe?"

The woman made no reply but a shake of her head. A moan escaped me. "The driver—of my car—is he safe?"

A heavy, kind hand patted me on the shoulder. "Sure, boss," said a deep voice, "I come to two hours ago. You're the bird we all thought was done for. That guy, whoever it was, sure did wallop us a mean blow. I ain't kiddin' you."

I tried my arms and legs. Apparently they were uninjured. I essayed to get out of bed, but the terrible pain in my head caused me to sink back into the soft comfort of the pillow.

"Young man," said a voice which apparently came from a doctor, "you had better stay where you are if you know what's good for you. To-morrow you ought to be in pretty good shape, for there are no bones broken and no skull fracture so far as I can see."

"Oh, I'll be all right in a little while," I said. "Has anybody called the police? Flora may still be there—in the mill."

"No, she ain't, partner," said my driver. "When I woke up they had skipped, auto, banged-up chauffeur and all. They're two hundred miles away by now at least."

"At any rate," I urged, "the police may be able to pick up some information from a search of the mill. Send for them, please."

"All right, governor, I'll go for them in my bus."

Two hours later the driver returned and ushered into my room a man who was evidently a detective and two policemen in uniform. In the intervening time I had bathed my head and dressed, so that I felt perfectly able to accompany the officers to the scene of our adventure.

"Now, what's all the trouble, young man?" asked the detective.

"I will explain to you as we drive out to the spot," I replied. "We can't afford to waste a minute."

"That's perfectly agreeable to me. There's nothin' I like so much as action."

I smiled. There was something rather comical about this little, pompous, blue-eyed detective. I could not help but contrast him with my acquaintance Scott. Scott should have been a detective with his powers of deduction and his tremendous physique. I wished that he could have been on this case in such a capacity.

On our way to the mill I stated the facts just as I knew them. I told about the strange incident that had occurred during the storm, when I was bringing Flora back to the hotel from the beach. I told about the torn-up note that I had found tucked in the shell, and said that I believed it had some decided bearing on the case.

"Have you got it with you?" asked the detective, whose name was Anderson.

"Yes."

"Well, maybe when the sun gets up we can take a look at it and dope something out."

It occurred to me then, for the first time, to look at my watch. It was half-past four, and the sky was just beginning to brighten with the coming of the new day. I was glad we were going to have a little daylight to help us out. Somehow I dreaded approaching that spot again in the darkness of night.

Once more at the mill, I forgot the thumping headache which had been torturing me during the ride. I determined to bend every energy towards reaching some solution to the crime which had taken Flora from me. I vowed that I would never relax until she had been found and the criminal or criminals brought to justice.

As we passed through the rickety old door I was horrified to see a pool of blood on the floor. I clutched the arm of my friend, the driver, and pointed toward it.

"What you gettin' excited about?" he said. "That's your own blood, pard. You were a sure-'nough mussy-lookin' sight when I spotted you after comin' out of my own trance."

The officers were rapidly looking about the place. In the bit of early morning light which filtered in through the entrance I could see the bare, roughly boarded floor, a few barrels and boxes and over in one corner a door which stirred my ever abundant curiosity.

"Nothing here," said Anderson gruffly. "Let's go downstairs and see what we can find."

Old broken-down steps, heaped with rubbish and dirt of every description, made the descent difficult. Once we reached the bottom my heart gave a leap, for over in a far corner, revealed by the light from the match I had lit, were two heavy cords. This was plainly where Flora had been held prisoner.

"Do you suppose she freed herself?" I asked Anderson, who was examining one of the pieces.

He jerked his head negatively. "Nope—cut with a sharp knife, an' I don't imagine the lady carried a knife about with her. They cut her loose after the fracas upstairs, that's what they did."

"Let's see if we can find some footprints," I suggested eagerly.

"What good would they do," snapped the detective. "I suppose you've read all the Sherlock Holmes stories and think we can put our mitts right on the criminal if we find a print of the heel of his shoe. I'm a-tellin' you, young fellow, that the only way to find anybody is to go after 'em—use plenty of action. Action 's what counts, an' I'm strong for it."

I made no reply. No doubt the fellow was right about footprints being of no use, but I couldn't help but resent the manner in which he was conducting the search for evidence.

For possibly ten minutes we remained in the cellar, searching every possible nook and cranny for something that would give some clue as to the identity of those who were committing this crime, but the criminals had been extremely cautious, and we found nothing.

"Ain't no use lookin' further," finally remarked the little blue-eyed man. "Me and my friends here are capable, but we can't find something where nothin' is."

Back at the hotel I reported no result to Mrs. West. She was distracted.

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" she moaned, rocking herself back and forth in her misery.

"My dear lady, don't lose heart. We're going to do everything. We're going to find her; we must find her! Heavens, I couldn't live without——" A new look suddenly sprang into the mother's face.

"What were you saying?" she asked. "Do you——"

"Yes," I replied, sensing her thought. "I do love her, and I am going to have her."

The gray eyes flooded with the tears of a new grief. In vain I tried to comfort her. She was inconsolable. I urged her to accompany me down to breakfast, but she refused. At length, feeling the need, though not having the desire for food, I went down to the dining-room.

It was now nine o'clock. Nearly all the tables were filled with a cheery, merry crowd that laughed and joked and made their plans for the day's pleasure. They were in such striking contrast to my own thoughts that I felt myself peculiarly alone, and I had the waiter seat me at a table for two, of which I was the only occupant.

I was halfway through my coffee and toast when I heard my name called by a bell-hop who had just entered the hall.

With fingers that trembled I slit the envelope of the telegram and read:

"Have heard of affair last night and your interest in case. Have just been made chief of detectives in Detroit, and as friend will be glad to help you.

(Signed) "DAN SCOTT."

"Any answer?" asked the boy.

"Yes, son; wait just a second."

I seized a pencil he proffered and hastily wrote:

"Help needed. Can you come up? Wire what train. Thanks.

"AARON SUMNER."

From breakfast the time dragged fearfully as I waited for Scott's reply. I talked with Mrs. West, I went to my own room and read, but the words blurred under my eyes. I went out on the porch to stroll about, but my brain was in such a frantic turmoil that I could get no rest or relief. I was dimly conscious of lowered voices as I passed certain groups of people. No doubt they had heard of last night's affairs and were talking over the different angles of the case as they saw them.

It was nearly eleven-thirty before the reply came that I so eagerly awaited. It gave me a shock of disappointment. It read:

"Sorry cannot come there. You come here. I think I can help you.

(Signed "DAN SCOTT."

I couldn't imagine, for the life of me, how Scott, bright though he might be, could be of help on this case while sitting comfortably back in his private office in Detroit. If it had been any other man I should most surely have stayed at the hotel and secured some competent operative to work on the case right at the spot where, I felt sure, all the clues there might be would be found. However, I had a wholesome respect for this giant man who could read folks's characters so aptly from their faces and handwriting. Possibly my confidence lacked real secure backing, but it was confidence nevertheless, and I decided to go. Bidding good-by to Mrs. West, I was just in the act of turning in my key to the clerk when a telegraph messenger stepped up and flipped a yellow envelope on the counter. The clerk picked it up.

"This is fortunate," he said. "It's for you."

It was from Scott and read:

"Before you leave get specimens of handwriting of Mrs. West and daughter, also get specimens of handwriting of any one who has been intimately acquainted with daughter."

I hastened back to room 704 and showed Mrs. West the telegram.

"It is from that detective I told you I was going to consult. Will you please get me the specimens he asks for as quickly as possible, for the train leaves at two, and it is an hour's ride to the station."

The lady hurried about the room, looking in the desk and bureau drawers for the samples requested. At length she returned and held out two letters to me.

"Who are these?" I asked.

"My daughter's and mine."

"Can you give me no letter of one who might have been intimately acquainted with your daughter?"

For the barest fraction of a second the woman hesitated. There was a decided look of ir-

resolution on her face, and then at once the expression changed.

"Yes," she said sharply. "I think I can find something. Do you require the whole letter?" she asked.

"No," I said, remembering how Scott worked from but one page of a note. "Just a couple of lines—a page if you can."

The woman went into her daughter's bedroom, and after an absence of two or three minutes returned and handed me a bit of writing, about half of a letter sheet.

"And now, good-by, Mrs. West. We're going to ferret this puzzle out, so don't you worry. I'll let you know just the minute we get any news."

CHAPTER FIVE

IT was surely a strange coincidence that I should have become so attached, while at the hotel, to a man who was destined to become chief of detectives in my own home city. He had betrayed all the attributes of a good detective in the short time he had come under my brief observation.

As I walked into his office the following morning, valise in hand, a sudden sense of elation came over me, only to be followed by a deeper one of despair, so my face must have borne a strange mixture of emotions as I passed through the door of an office marked "Private" and found myself confronting Scott.

"Well," he said, rising from his seat behind a massive, flat-top mahogany desk, "it is extraordinary that I am called upon to put in practical use those little theories of mine I was explaining to you that afternoon on the porch."

"Yes, and I'll be indebted to you for life if you solve the riddle."

"Why such a deep interest in this particular case?" he asked, smiling pleasantly. "May I ask: Were you interested in the girl?"

"It is more than interest. It is the real thing," I replied.

"Pray put down your valise and be seated," said Scott. He resumed his own seat, and from somewhere in the depths of his desk he withdrew the same old brier pipe. "Have a cigar," he said, passing over his box.

"Thanks. It may steady my nerves, and if it does it's worth its weight in gold."

I don't know whether it was the cigar, or Scott, or the soft, quiet furnishings of the office, but there was something in the atmosphere of the room that certainly quieted my badly frayed nerves. I settled myself down comfortably in a richly upholstered chair near by.

"You were evidently busy on the case all night," said the big man. "I should judge you haven't shaved for two days."

"Correct. I had a certain kind of sleep night before last, but it wasn't exactly what you'd call a refreshing nap. As you have probably read, I was put out of business by the thug or thugs who captured and ran away with Flora."

"So I understand. Now will you please give me all the facts of the case."

"Gladly," I replied, whereupon I proceeded to give him a complete outline of everything that had occurred in the last forty-eight hours.

He listened attentively, making no comment save the occasional nod of his head.

When I had finished he asked abruptly:

"Did you bring the specimens of handwriting I requested?"

For answer I withdrew them from my pocket and laid them on his desk. I explained which person each bit of handwriting belonged to and watched him as he placed each sample in a separate envelope, marking the outside with the name.

"And here," I interrupted, "is the shell and the torn note which I found in Flora's bedroom."

The detective took the shell, and looked at it curiously; then he removed the scraps of paper and started fitting them together. It seems as though they shaped themselves by magic under his deft, skilled fingers. After ten minutes he had them assembled so that the words could be read. To my unpracticed eye they were meaningless. They read something like

"Watchingive otmynel oorthe ilded quip mdoare entionamemat umneryousky."

"A child's code," said Scott and rapidly translated to my astonished ears:

"I am watching you. Do not mention my name to Sumner or you die."

"What can it mean?" I cried.

"Patience, patience," said the other; "we cannot jump to conclusions. I have no doubt we shall find out very shortly. I will also," he continued, "look over these samples from Mrs. and Miss West and the "intimate friend.'" He chewed the end of his pencil reflectively for a minute. "Where will you be if I should want to get hold of you in a hurry for any reason?"

"At my office or at the Detroit Club, where I have a room. I shall try to accomplish a little work at the office, but I'm afraid my tortured thoughts won't let me think of business."

CHAPTER SIX

WHEN I returned to my office my partner, Mr. Davis, was out. The stenographer, the only employee of our office, said that he expected to be back late that afternoon, having left shortly before lunch.

I had been working for about three-quarters of an hour on dictation and various matters connected with the pieces of property we owned when I was called to the telephone.

"Who is this?" asked the voice.

"Sumner of Sumner-Davis Company," I replied.

"Be you the owner of property at number eighty-three Wakefield Avenue?"

"Yes."

"Well, some kid smashed a lot of the windows, an' it wasn't our kid either, because he's a good boy and wouldn't do such nonsense. I thought maybe you'd like to know, so you wouldn't suspect him as you might if we didn't told you about it before."

"All right," I said, trying to conceal the laugh in my voice. "Thanks. I'll try to get up there soon to take care of it." I hung up the receiver and grinned. It was the first time I had smiled in forty-eight hours, and it felt decidedly pleasant. It was strange how children could wilfully destroy vacant property without any apparent twinges of conscience. The house at eighty-three Wakefield avenue was my father's old home. Upon my return from France and after my father's death, I could not bring myself to bear the thought of living in that house, so I had kept it vacant out of respect to his memory, intending some time in the near future to completely refinish and refurnish it inside. Well, the matter of the broken windows could wait a bit. There were too many things pressing for attention for me to occupy my time with trifles.

It must have been twenty minutes later that once more the telephone rang. This time it was Scott.

"Sumner, will you please bring over to me a specimen of your own handwriting and that of your partner, and if you have that letter of your father's, I'd like to see that again, too."

"Certainly," I replied, "though I fail to see how I, my partner and my father are connected in this present case."

"Possibly you don't," he replied, "and possibly there is no connection whatever; nevertheless I want them for a certain purpose. Can you come right away?"

"Yes," I said, "I'll be on my way in two minutes."

Fifteen minutes later I was in Scott's office. "Here they are. Here's my father's last letter. Here are the four letters from my partner, Davis, each of the four days I was away from the office, and here is a specimen of my own inartistic handwriting." I placed them on his desk in three piles. "Nothing new, is there, Scott?"

He shook his head. "Not yet," said he. "Anything new at the office?"

"Why, no, that is, nothing special. I learned over the telephone a few minutes ago that some boys had broken several of the windows in my father's old home on Wakefield avenue. I think I'll go around that way on my way back to the office. If it should rain heavily a lot of damage to the interior of the house might result."

"That is very odd," said Scott.

"One of those costly childish pranks, no doubt," I said. "Well, good-by."

"Good-by," said Scott. "And say, see if you can tell what the boys used in breaking the windows."

As I approached the old home old memories

and old associations came to my mind and saddened me. I wished that my father had lived, for I felt sure that we could have had many years together of congenial companionship. He had, no doubt, softened a great deal toward the latter end of his life.

The house stood on a corner, and was removed by one lot at the back and another lot at the side from the nearest neighbors. It was of old-fashioned design, the outside constructed with many bays and nooks, among which I had played hide and seek as a child. It contained many rooms, the ceilings were high, and it had always been a difficult house to heat properly in the winter.

I could see that the windows in the front of the place were intact, so I skirted around to the north side. Here I stopped, amazed, for three panes of glass were totally shivered. After some moments of surprised contemplation I was just about to start for the nearest phone to call a glazier when something caught my attention that caused a chill of apprehension to grip me in a way I could not throw off. When I recovered from the first and most intense shock I hurried to a drugstore a block from the house.

In a telephone booth I got in touch with my friend at headquarters.

"Scott," I said, "I wish you'd come right out here. I'm at eighty-three Wakefield avenue, and there's something queer about this window smashing."

"All right," he assented, "I'll be right out. Take me about ten minutes."

A few moments later I met Scott as he drove up in front of the old home. I escorted him immediately to the side of the house.

"Look there," I said, pointing to the three broken windows, "and now, look here." I pointed down at the ground where glass lay scattered all about. "That was done from the inside," was my brief comment; "now who do you suppose did it?"

"Got a key to the house?" asked Scott grimly.

I nodded. Two minutes later we were going through the lower floor, at Scott's suggestion, keeping as close to the walls as possible.

There was not a chip of glass to be seen anywhere.

"Do you notice anything peculiar about the way the panes were broken?" asked the big man.

"No, can't say I do," I replied.

"You know," said Scott, "occasionally even a practical, hard-headed detective can use a little of the Sherlock Holmes type of deduction with considerable profit. Let me call your attention to the fact that the window nearest the front of the house is broken the worst, the next one back not quite so badly, while the last window received the weakest blow. Also please note those little prints on this very dusty floor. Somebody—the one who broke the windows—did it while running from the front of the house to the back, for the toes of the shoes only show in the dirt. Get me?"

I nodded, stunned by the thoughts which came thronging into my mind.

"Now," said Scott in a tone which instinctively made one obey, "let's see the rest of this house. Somehow it interests me. You say your father used to live here?"

"Yes," I replied. "This was his home. I was born here, but it has changed greatly since I last saw it, some ten and a half years ago. Father seems to have made some additions to it and changed the location of some of the rooms. As a matter of fact, I should scarcely recognize it, much less feel at home here. That is why I am staying at the club."

We were passing through the rooms while I was talking.

"You have, of course, noticed these heavier footprints which follow along beside the lighter ones of the woman."

"No," I confessed in astonishment.

"They end here," said Scott a moment later. "The rogues had sense enough to do a little housecleaning at least and cover up their traces. Somebody has swept out pretty thoroughly from this point on."

We passed through all the rooms of the first and second story with nothing else of interest to attract our attention.

"An attic above, I presume," said Scott.

I nodded.

"What's up there?"

"Trunks, boxes and old furniture," I replied.

"Let's have a look."

Accordingly we climbed the creaky stairs into the dingy roughly planked room which

covered the entire house and was lighted by two small windows. These were so covered with accumulated dirt, dust and cobwebs that Scott and I had to scrape them with a couple of sticks in order to have light enough to find our way about.

Boxes and trunks and furniture were heaped high. For five minutes the chief of detectives looked about. Presently, with a quick motion, he flicked a cloth from an old chair. Taking a handkerchief from his pocket, he passed it over one of the arms. "Hum!" he murmured. "Pretty good chair to be up here in the attic. Whose was it, your father's?"

I looked at it curiously. "Strange," I said, "but I can't seem to recall it. He must have bought it while I was away."

Two or three minutes later when I was at the back of the room, looking at some books that had once been my treasures, I heard a suppressed cry come from the lips of Scott. I turned sharply. He was still standing before the chair. As I stepped across the floor toward him he carelessly threw over it the cloth which had served as a cover.

"What is it, Scott?" I asked.

"Sumner, in your business do you or have you ever found yourself suddenly struck by an inspiration?"

"Maybe, but I should say darned seldom."

"Well, I just had one," continued the detective. "Is your partner at the office?"

"Don't know," I replied. "He wasn't when I left, but the girl said he expected to be back late this afternoon."

Scott drummed his finger-tips on the top of a trunk. "Suppose you go to a phone and call the office. If he's in ask him to come right up here. Don't tell him who I am. When he comes bring him up in the attic."

"Scott, what on earth's got into you?" I asked somewhat hotly. "You very kindly offered to help me solve the matter of Flora's disappearance, and now you're going off on a tangent into some other matter totally foreign to the case."

"Very well," said Scott, "if you prefer to follow your own methods go ahead. I am trying to do what I can to help you. I want to ask your partner some questions that only he can answer, for by your own statement you were in France for ten years, while your partner was helping your father run the business."

While Scott was speaking I was bitterly regretting my hasty words. Though for the life of me I couldn't see what he was driving at, nevertheless I owed it to the man to give him a fair deal.

"I beg your pardon, friend," I said. "I didn't mean to be so hasty, but I've had such a bunch of trouble come upon me in the last two days that my nerves are all on edge. I'll go and call Davis now."

I had found Davis in when I called the office, and fifteen minutes later he appeared at the house.

"What's the idea, Sumner?" he asked as he came hurrying up the steps.

"There's a man here who wants to talk about some sort of business. He has seen me, and now he wants to see you. I can't gather what his business is, but he insisted I call you, so I did. Hope you weren't inconvenienced?"

"Well," he replied, as we mounted the stairs, "this is most unusual, I must say. Where on earth is this man?"

"Up in the attic."

Davis looked me full in the face. "Well," he said with a grunt of disgust, "he must be a nut—right."

As we entered the attic together I was surprised to see that Scott had placed three chairs in a triangular grouping near the window at the front of the room. I led the way forward.

"Mr. Scott," I said, "I'd like you to meet my partner, Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis will probably be able to give you any information you desire," I added, turning to the detective.

"Yes, I would like some information from Mr. Davis," said the latter. He made no move to sit down, so we all remained standing.

Mr. Davis, I believe you were the partner of Mr. Sumner, senior, for some seven years. Am I right?"

The man addressed nodded.

"Before that time you were in the furniture manufacturing business, where you started from the ground up. That is correct also, isn't it?"

Once more the man nodded, this time in frank surprise.

"You also dabbled in a number of things

such as jewelry, drugs, hardware, and a number of other businesses?"

"That is all true," said Davis, "but you will pardon me if I say that I fail to see why it was necessary for me to come up here in this dusty attic to answer such questions or rather to verify your statements."

"Well, well, it does seem rather queer to you, no doubt," said Scott with a little laugh, "but then what seems important to one man is very important to another." He paused for a moment, then withdrew a number of papers from his inside coat pocket. "Oh, by the way," he said hastily, "you don't mind if I call you 'Davis;' do you?"

Davis looked up in frank surprise. "Why, no, of course not; that is my name, anyway."

"Is it?" said the detective. "I must be getting forgetful. I had thought it was something else. Well, Davis, I have here some very interesting papers. One of these is a letter written by Mr. Sumner, senior. It is the last letter he ever wrote in this world, and it is to his son, your present partner. It is the letter of a man who was driven insane through worry over some one who tricked him, probably in business. Mr. Sumner, senior, as you know, died after an illness of three days—an illness that the doctors were unable to explain. Unknown to the general public, the police department have had the matter of his death on their files for some months; in fact, ever since he died. They were determined to solve the mystery of his death."

My partner had taken hold of the back of a chair.

"Now," continued Scott, "I have here, also, three most, no, four, most interesting letters written by yourself to your partner while he was on his recent unfortunate vacation. There is something most remarkable about these letters. I will be brief. They are all dated different dates, but were all written at the same time!"

Davis had collapsed rather than sat in the chair beside which he had been standing. The same instant Scott sprang toward him.

"Look out!" he cried, and as his voice spoke I heard a faint click, which seemed to come from the chair. Like a stone snapped from a slingshot, Davis leaped from his seat. His arms were thrust forward, his face distorted.

"I've got it!" he shrieked, and then: "I've got it," came in a moan as he sank to the floor.

Scott dropped to the floor beside him. "We'll try to save you, man, but first, quick, tell us where you've hidden the girl."

One hand, which shook as with the palsy, raised from the floor, and the index finger pointed to a far corner of the room.

In a low murmur came the words: "Behind the trunks." Then the voice lapsed off into apparent unconsciousness.

"Sumner," said Scott, "you get the girl while I take this man to the hospital. We'll try to save him, though he doesn't deserve it." He bent over and, picking the limp form up and laying it over his shoulder like a big bag of straw, he hurried down the attic steps.

Feverishly I pulled the boxes and trunks aside in the spot Davis had indicated. In a moment, by the aid of a match, I found Flora lying unconscious on the floor, surrounded and covered by boxes and trunks. Frantically I bore her in my arms to the front of the attic and knocked out the glass in the window to admit fresh air.

Oh, the agony of that wait while I rubbed her wrists and temples. My only hope was the feeble throbbing of her heart. After what seemed an interminable length of time the lids flickered, then slowly opened.

"Flora!" I cried. "My girl! Everything's all right now, thank God!"

"My husband, where is he? He is not here, is he?" She shrank into my arms.

My head swam. "Your husband," I cried. "Who, Davis?"

"No, I don't know Davis. My husband's name was Cooke."

"Describe him," I said, and after she had given me a perfect picture of my partner a great light began to dawn on me.

"He—he was a brute. He would have left me here to die. I—I did not believe in divorce, but I would not live with him, for he was a beast. I had not seen him for a year. He overtook me at the lake and brought me back here. I found out then that you were his partner. He was going to kill you next so he could get the whole business, for he said you had willed it to him."

I nodded. "That is so," I said; "I was a fool."

Half an hour later Scott returned and found us shamelessly in each other's arms. He shook his head. "He will never live. The poison is running through his system and is killing him just as surely as it killed your father, Sumner."

"What!" I cried. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Davis, or rather Cooke, this lady's husband, killed your father by means of this chair." The detective stepped across the room, and the girl and I followed. "Cooke constructed this chair so that if any one sat in it and leaned back he would release a spring, which would, in turn, dart a tiny needle coated with a deadly poison into the thigh of the man or woman's leg. It worked on your father, and he was going to try it on you next, but he got it himself instead."

I shuddered. "But why did he kill father?"

"Because," answered the big man, "he thought your father was alone in the world, and he knew that the will of nineteen fourteen left the business to him. It was a great shock to Cooke when you turned up and the will was read. Immediately he voted to get you in the same manner. He was clever enough to induce you—poor business man that you are—to make your will and partnership papers in his favor. Incidentally," continued the detective, "his handwriting shows him to be the worst type of criminal insane, the type which is uncanny in the brilliant execution of their plans."

For some moments we were all silent, then I turned to Flora. "Let's go from this horrible place. A few days now and we will know enough happiness to make up for the terrors we have gone through."

Quietly and solemnly she nodded, and together the three of us left the house.

SEARCHING FOR LOST SILVER MINES

THE arrival of a party of Indians in the mountains of Kentucky from Oklahoma has revived a hundred and forty year search for the silver mines discovered by John Swift in 1761. From that time to 1769 Swift made a number of trips into that section of the country, returning after each trip to his home in North Carolina with a large quantity of silver.

Swift, finally driven out of Kentucky and killed by hostile Indians, left very meager information regarding his journeys and the places where he had hidden sums of money. The most minute description is that contained in a memorandum which states that "on the First of September, 1769, we left between 22,000 and 30,000 dollars and crowns on a large creek running near the south course. Close to the spot we marked our names (Swift, Jefferson, Munday and others) on a beach tree —with compass, square and trowel. No great distance from this place we left $15,000 of the same kind, marking three or four trees with markers. Not far from these we left the prize near a forked white oak, and about three feet underground and laid two long stones across it, marking several stones close about it. At the forks of Sandy, close by the fork, is a small rock; it has a spring in one end of it. Between it and a small branch we hid a prize under the ground; it was valued at $6,000."

A few years ago a bar of pure silver was found near a mill in Carter county. Several years ago a party of Indians visited Wolfe county and made its way into the hills. The Indian tracks were followed to a small creek by the side of which was a deep excavation in which a heavy body had rested. The Indians later were seen carrying away heavy bags, and from their talk it is believed they found part of the Swift silver.

There are more than a hundred caves in Carter county. In one of these a quantity of tools and instruments was discovered, which led to the belief that the mine was near one of these caves. One band of Indians was reported to be in possession of a map, but whether this was the Swift map or not never was known.

As a legend or fable is told to children, so the mothers of Kentucky tell their children the story of Swift's mine.

No word has been received from the last party to go in quest of the treasure, and its return is anxiously awaited.

His Opinion About It

By JOHN SHERMAN

HE was a man with a habitual suspicion of everybody—a man who believed that all the people in the world were his enemies.

It was my pleasure—or pain, rather—to have him for a traveling companion on a certain journey up the Hudson, on one of the famed day boats.

He sat upon the camp-stool next to me, and he had a guide-book.

It was very evident that he was a foreigner, for nobody except foreigners or gentlemen en route for the insane asylum ever buy that gross fraud known as a Guide-book.

He perused it intently for a while (when the episode of which I am writing occurred, we were between Tarrytown and West Point, the loveliest part of the American Rhine), then shutting it up, he turned to me.

He did not speak to me at once.

First he took a careful scrutiny of your humble servant, as if to persuade himself that no subtle villainy lurked in my form or features—that I was neither receiver for a life insurance company, nor a Missouri marauder.

"Got a knife?" at last he snapped.

"Yes," I replied.

"Pen-knife?"

I replied that he had named the knife's breed correctly.

As a rule, American gentlemen do not cumber themselves with carving or bowie-knives.

"Lend it to me?"

I passed it over.

He looked at it inquisitionally.

Perhaps he suspected that there might be a deadly poison impregnating its blade.

Finally, though, he condescended to use it, and began to clean his nails.

The way he did it was a key to the nature of the man.

He did not softly, artistically remove the erring soil, but he dug at it viciously, roughly, like a small boy hoes potatoes when he would rather be fishing.

Presently he spoke.

"It's a lie!" said he, jabbing away at a speck beneath one thumb-nail.

"That?" asked I, wondering whether he was referring to the thumb-nail, the speck, or my knife.

He indicated the guide-book, which had slipped from his lap to the deck.

As he uttered the assertion he gave a kick which sent the object of his abuse fluttering far out into the stream.

He noted my look of wonder.

"Ah! it is so," said he. "What does it say? One part says: 'The white house nestling amongst the trees upon the left bank, just after you leave McGuire's Dock, was once General Washington's headquarters.' Have we stopped at McGuire's Dock?"

"No," I returned.

"Did you ever hear of McGuire's Dock?"

"No."

"Is there a McGuire's Dock?"

"Not as I know."

"Did you perceive any white house nestling amongst the trees upon the left bank after we left Tarrytown? for that infernal book says McGuire's Dock is just above Tarrytown."

"I did not."

"And you couldn't see it. It ain't there. There never was a white house, because there never was a McGuire's Dock. General Washington never made his headquarters there, because he could not headquarter a house which does not exist, and——"

He paused suddenly.

He pointed out a dilapidated old building which stood, proudly forlorn, upon a high promontory, which jutted out upon the river.

"See that?" queried he.

"Yes," I replied.

"What is it?"

"Looks to me like a cow-shed in hard luck."

"Just what I say. What do you suppose the guide-book called it?"

"What?"

"Said it was a castle, built by an eccentric French nobleman. A castle, think of it. Nice old castle, ain't it? Why, an ordinary hog-pen would loom up in proud magnificence beside it. A castle built by an eccentric French nobleman. It's nothing but a three-board shanty put up by a drunken Irishman, who was not so drunk but that he was horrified at his work, and fled wildly to the woods."

Next, as the boat glided along, he pointed out a mountain.

It was a small, unostentatious, shrub-covered mountain.

"Ain't that a noble peak?" asked he.

I said it was not, to my idea.

It was quietly respectable, but I did not perceive where the noble came in.

"Neither do I," growled he. "Neither does anybody else, except the premeditated liar who made up that guide-book. He says it is noble. In one sense it is. It is a noble fraud. A peak!—a mountain! It's a hill, that is all that it is, a mean, measly hill. Give me a gang of Italians and plenty of dirt and I could make a mountain that would beat that all hollow inside of ten days; yes, inside of a week. Now, do you see that blighted oak?"

I looked where he pointed.

There was a skeleton tree upon a lonely rock.

It did not appear to me, though, like an oak —more like an elongated cucumber vine.

And I said so.

My opinion appeared to please my fellow passenger.

"Yet that guide-book," said he—"I studied the contents of it as far as Poughkeepsie—had the printed gall to say that it was the famous oak upon which Miss Hop-Scotch or some other flat-nosed Indian squaw hung herself on account of disappointed love. If she wanted to hang herself she could have done it in her wigwam. Suppose she would walk five or six miles through tanglewood and briers to attach herself to an old kindling-wood ruin like that? Not much. Besides, she could not have hung herself onto it if she wanted to."

"Why not?"

"Her weight would have pulled it down. Nice tree that to hang yourself on. Might just as well attempt strangulation from a grape-vine. Pshaw!"

The speaker was silent for a while until we turned around a curve of the river, and beheld upon our left an island.

Then he burst out again:

"Notice that island?"

"Yes."

"Ordinary island?"

"Yes."

"Know what the guide-book relates concerning it?"

"I don't."

"I'll tell you. The guide-book says that Captain Kidd is supposed to have buried a good deal of his treasure there. Supposed! Just think of the absurdity of the thing—Captain Kidd sailing forty or fifty miles up the river to bury his treasure upon a little island. Couldn't he have buried it somewhere around New York?"

I agreed that he could.

My questioner fumed afresh.

"Just what I say," he exclaimed; "and besides, the island is all rock. To bury anything there he would have had to make a blast. He wouldn't do that, for he was not that sort. Make a blast and wake up the whole river when he could go quietly and unperceived over to Jersey and bury his treasures in the deep red mud, with no trouble at all. Decidedly not. Oh, I would just like to have the maniac who concocted that guide-book in my grip for long enough to kill him. As I said before, that pamphlet is a lie."

With that he returned my pen-knife and relapsed into his former state of suspicious misanthrophy.

And as the boat just then touched the dock at Newburg, I let him relapse.

But after all I have an idea that his opinion about guide-books was not so far out of the way.

A CLUE *from the* WATER

by

Merritt L. Allen

"BUTCH" JOHNSON labored and puffed up the creaking narrow stairway which led to the second floor of a downtown building in the city of Seeyville. Just behind him Newman Johnson scowled slightly because he was in the habit of taking these same steps two at a time. The two men were brothers, and they constituted the Johnson Detective Agency. The agency had been a boyhood dream of theirs, and now, from lack of business, their vision was passing away as a mist before the bright sunshine.

"Say, Newman, you pick up the morning paper, will you?" Butch panted as he unlocked the door leading into the room, which served as their office. "Gosh, I'll bet I've gained twenty pounds in the last month."

"You'll be losing some of it soon when you get out and hustle for a living," Newman replied, as he leaned over to pick up the Seeyville *Gazette*.

"How I hate to leave it all," Butch said, sinking into a chair which groaned beneath his weight.

"It's tough luck, sure enough. Let's see what the paper has in the way of murder this morning."

"Murder, huh! They don't even play marbles in this berg. Business is rotten!" Butch growled and locked his fingers together over his stomach.

"Oh, I don't know," Newman returned from the depths of the paper; "Mike Black has been busy right in this city."

"What!"

"Sure enough; listen to this:

Millionaire Albright had a surprise in store for him last night. He was on his way to the international water races to be held in a few days on Lake Ontario. No mishap had marred the pleasure of the party on board his "Sunbeam" as she made her way up the Hudson river to the New York State Barge Canal and from there to Lock No. 10, where Mr. Albright was held up and robbed by the notorious Mike Black and his gang. Black waited until the operator brought the motor boat to the upper water level in the lock, and then one of the gang covered the operator while the remainder thoroughly pilfered the boat. No clue has been found as to where Black went after he left the canal. There is an aggregate reward of $20,000 for the capture of this hold-up man.

"There you are, Butch," handing the paper to his brother.

"Gosh!"

"Twenty thou.," Newman breathed, reaching out his hands and clutching the air as if the money were really within reach.

"Wouldn't it be a feather in our cap, though, if we could only capture him," Butch exulted.

"Yes, it would not only be a feather in our cap, but it would feather our purse so we could have a real live agency in a big city."

"Gosh!"

"I'm going to have a talk with that operator up at the lock," Newman decided; "I haven't anything else to do; might as well," with a shrug of his shoulders.

Newman opened the door and was about to step out into the hallway when the telephone rang. Butch was nearest the telephone, so Newman waited for him to answer it. The conversation was short and to the point.

"Got a job for you, Newman," Butch beamed as he hung up the receiver.

"At last?"

"Yep! It's P. G. Ansom, the big boy what's got his boat tied up at the Gorham Electric Works dock. You know he's got dairy farms all out through the western part of the state, and he's buying some machinery from the works. He's leaving to-night, and this morning's paper gave him a scare. Take a run down and see what he wants."

Newman stopped in at police headquarters on his way to the water front to get a line on this man Mike Black. The sergeant at the desk was usually a close-mouthed man whenever Newman was looking for information, but to-day he was willing to talk to anybody outside the force.

"How are yuh, Johnson? Read the paper this morning, didn't yuh?"

Newman knew the sergeant from A to Z, and answered craftily:

"Oh, I looked it over, Madden. Anything exciting?"

"Why, why, Mike Black's been busy up at the lock. Held up a man in his boat."

"Huh!"

"Where's that paper? I guess Charlie took it with him," feeling vexed because his news did not excite Newman over much.

"Who is this man Mike Black?" Newman asked cautiously.

"You're a fine detective," Madden snorted. "Why, there's a reward of $20,000 for his capture. Never been caught since he started his crooked career as a boy."

"He must be rich by now?" answered Newman, still fishing for information.

"Must be. There's not much on record about him, but he carries things in a high-handed way. The chief was telling me that Black has progressed with his hold-ups as the means of travel have advanced."

"I suppose his next hold-up will be an airship," said Newman, laughing.

"Can't tell," Madden replied seriously. "His first job was to hold up a stage coach out West, and he was driven from that country by a posse of ranchers. He took to the railroads and automobiles after that, and now he's giving the barge canal a look in."

"He ought to make good," Newman replied somewhat indifferently, "for the canal's full of commercial as well as pleasure craft. Well, I thought I'd drop in for a minute, Madden."

Newman left the building with a smile, for he had skillfully wormed out of Madden all the available information concerning Mike Black.

P. G. Ansom was sitting on the deck of his motor boat *Pleasure,* enjoying a cigar, when Newman put in his appearance.

"You's from the Johnson Detective Agency, eh?" Ansom asked, shaking Newman's hand.

"Yes, I'm Newman Johnson," appraising Ansom from force of habit.

"Uh, yes, of course, glad to know you. You see this hold-up's got me scared, and I want somebody's advice about—ah—er—protection and all that. I've got quite a lot of money with me, Mr. Johnson, and I don't want a bunch of roughnecks mussing up my boat, either. Isn't she a beauty?" Ansom asked, extending his hand toward his motor boat.

"Great! I wish I could afford a boat like that?" Newman said enviously.

"Would you like to look her over?"

"Yes, I would."

When the inspection was over, Newman pronounced it the finest thing he had ever seen in the way of a boat. Everything, from the gasolene engine to the deck furnishings, had been selected with infinite care.

"I think two men will be all you need for

any emergency, Mr. Ansom, and I'll have them at Lock No. 10 to-night when you go through. You know when you are prepared the expected doesn't happen. When do you intend to start?"

"Oh, around nine o'clock, I guess. There isn't so much business on the big ditch then. Will you be one of the two men?"

Newman did not answer, and Ansom saw that he was intently watching the crew, who were painting a green canoe on the dock.

"You see, I keep my men busy," Ansom explained. "I don't want them running around town to-day for fear they won't show up to-night."

"That's a splendid idea," replied Newman, laughing.

The crew had overheard the remark of Mr. Ansom, and they grinned sheepishly when Newman stopped by the canoe for a few seconds.

After leaving Ansom, Newman hurried toward the lock. For months he had faced the humiliating fact that the agency was on its last legs, and now he saw just a chance to save his brother and himself from defeat.

Newman saw nothing exciting as he approached Lock No. 10 except a few curious people, but they were straggling away, one by one, because there was nothing about the place which suggested that there had been a hold-up the previous night. The channel of the canal followed the Mohawk river at this point, and a big steel dam held the waters of the river at the required fourteen-foot level. The large lock was on one side of this dam, and above a steel structure bridge spanned the river. Newman sought out the operator and told him of his errand.

"I understand that there were six or eight men with Mike Black!"

The operator shook his head. "Don't think so; one held me up, and this man Albridge said there were only two on the boat. There may have been more, but nobody saw them."

"Um, only three," Newman repeated thoughtfully. "The paper said there was no clue as to where they went after leaving here. Tell me when you last saw them or heard them."

"Last I heard was they were running across the bridge up there."

Newman thanked the operator for the information and gave him a cigar, which Ansom had given him a short time previous.

"Just as I thought, just as I thought," said Newman when he had gained the bridge after a hard climb up the embankment.

Newman stuck his hands into his trouser pockets and walked slowly across the bridge, shifting his eyes over every inch of the planking for a possible clue.

"They didn't escape in a car, for the hold-up was telephoned to all the villages within a radius of a hundred or two hundred miles. No, they couldn't escape that way," Newman reasoned.

He had reached the edge of the bridge by this time and was walking along the dirt road. Newman had gone perhaps a hundred yards when something in the field at his right claimed his attention. The dust from the road had settled on all the vegetation in the field, but cutting diagonally across the lot was a clearly defined path where there was no dust. It looked as if several people had been through there but recently.

On the alert for any possible sign of the gang, Newman followed this path, which continued for perhaps an eighth of a mile, and then abruptly ended by a stretch of narrow water. It was a section of the old Erie Canal which is now used for turbine test by the Gorham Electric Works.

"So they tried to cover their tracks by taking this water course back to the city, where they're probably hiding now. Too many crooks nowadays are trying to escape capture by hiding near the scene of their crime, thinking that the authorities will be hunting for them miles away."

Newman picked up a rock and threw it into the middle of the old canal. He watched the rings as they traveled toward him and finally lapped at his feet. A bit of wood bobbed up and down upon the water, and Newman idly stooped and picked it up. He was about to toss it back, but upon second thought examined it more thoroughly. A look of understanding came into his eyes as he turned the bit of wood over and over. Finally he stuffed it into his pocket and bent down to examine the rocks upon which he was standing. What he saw there gave him much satisfaction.

"I must get back where there's a telephone and let my brother know that he will have to be on deck to-night when P. G. Ansom goes through Lock No. 10. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ansom will think I'm trying to sink his boat when he sees my brother, Butch, boarding his pride and joy."

A little before nine o'clock Ansom's *Pleasuse* left her mooring place and headed out into the marked channel of the canal. There were no lights on the motor boat except the regulation ones at the bow and stern. This enabled the man at the wheel to make out the channel buoy lights much better. It did not take them long to reach the lock, and as soon as the immense gates closed behind them the water began to rush in and to push the small pleasure boat upward. There was no sound about except that of rushing water from the overflow of the dam on the left-hand side and that of the intake. The disturbed water made the boat bob about like a bit of cork until it scraped against the side of the concrete lock.

When the upper level was reached one of the men jumped off and made the boat fast with a line. From somewhere in the darkness four figures appeared. Newman was in the lead, and he was striding forward with nervous steps. Butch labored and puffed closely behind him. Two policemen followed the brothers.

"Here we are, Mr. Ansom, per schedule," Newman greeted the portly man on the boat.

"So I see. Hum—er—what's the idea of the cops trailing along?"

"Oh, I brought them along to add a little color to the scene."

"Yes, yes; makes quite a nifty stage setting at that," Ansom laughed.

"Pardon me, but this is my brother, commonly known as Butch Johnson, Mr. Ansom."

Ansom stuck out his hand and smiled congenially, but he did not notice one of the policemen step just back of him. When Butch had Ansom's hand within the grip of his large right hand, then this policeman lifted Ansom's left hand and slipped a pair of handcuffs on his two wrists. While Ansom was wondering what it all meant, Butch and the two policemen drew their guns in case of any resistance from the crew. Ansom came out of his stunned condition.

"Well, well," he laughed, "I see you are making a realistic scene here; quite humorous, but I really must insist on your taking these off," looking down at the handcuffs.

Newman looked toward the bow of the boat before answering and saw that the small crew were all assembled with hands high in the air.

"A bluff won't go now, Mike Black."

"Mike Black? You don't for one minute think I'm that notorious hold-up man, do you?"

Newman sneered.

The look of contempt on his face threw Ansom into a rage. He cursed and told Newman what was going to happen to him when the handcuffs were off.

But the assured manner of Newman told Ansom that his game was up.

"Take 'em off! Take 'em off, I tell you," he wailed, fear taking the place of his anger. "You ain't got nothing on me. Take 'em off! What makes you think I'm Mike Black?"

For reply Newman took out the bit of wood which he had stuck in his pocket that morning. Ansom watched him with fascinated eyes as Newman slowly turned the splinter around. On one side there was a layer of green paint.

"I wondered at the time, Black, why you were having that canoe painted when you were about to leave the city. Rocks sure do mar the sides of a boat, especially when a person is in a hurry. Do I need to show you where this bit of wood fits on your canoe or will you confess?"

"I'm your man," Ansom said calmly after a moment's hesitation.

"Gosh!" Butch exclaimed, coming up from the bow of the boat just in time to hear the words which were the key to a full-fledged Johnson Detective Agency.

When Human Hearts Were Trumps

By JOE BURKE

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

CHIEF OF POLICE BULLARD'S feet descended to the floor with a bang. Dust that arose from the time-worn carpet ascended grotesquely among the sunbeams that percolated through the faded green shade.

"Oh, boy! That's luck!" he ejaculated as his steel-gray eyes reread the sickly yellow sheet that he held in his hand.

"Why all the hilarity, chief?" drawled a sleepy voice. The tone was languid to an extreme. "Your favorite plug nosed under th' wire first—what?"

The chief straightened up with a snort.

"Horse nothing!" he bellowed. "If you'd think and do less gambling you'd have more time—and money, too—to think of what the department thinks of you as a detective."

"Is that intended as a compliment?" asked the listless one, with the faintest suspicion of a smile.

"Call it what you like, I don't care!" snapped Bullard, but, for heaven's sake, Briggs, try an' drag your *poor overworked* body in here till I pass you some news."

His smile now extending nearly to his ears, Detective John Briggs arose slowly and entered the dingy office of his superior.

No greater contrast could be imagined than that which was presented between those two law-enforcers—the refined, almost esthetic, subordinate standing serenely at attention, the big commanding bulk of the formidable head of the city's sleuths leaning back in his chair.

Bullard, with a few strands of gray hair plastered down over the top of his shiny bald pate, his piercing eyes twinkling beneath a canopy of bushy eyebrows, held out a telegram.

Briggs was a good-looking chap of thirty. As a valiant officer of the law he had few equals. A tireless nemesis when in pursuit of a fugitive, a dead shot, and beneath his trim tailored suit his lean body was a mass of wiry sinews and rippling muscles.

Chief Bullard had a wholesome regard for his debonair subordinate. He knew that Briggs had won his spurs in the criminal department by sheer genius, and that he was, of all men, the most feared. He scowled as he handed the message to the young sleuth, and attempted his former mannerism when he walked a beat in uniform, by crooking his thumbs in his belt; his fingers fumbled aimlessly around the pockets of his vest. He coughed as he looked up sharply, then laughed with self-conscious humor.

"Well, whataya think o' it?" he asked gruffly when Briggs laid the yellow sheet on his desk and lowered himself into a chair.

"Not much to think of, chief," he drawled. "I've heard my father mention that burg—Silvercreek; it's a mining town on the edge of the state of Wyoming. Tough place likely. I'm kinda sorry for th' poor devil, chief; I think, by what that reads, he was intendin' to go straight."

"Straight!" snorted Bullard, sitting erect. "We want him here, an' want him bad. Do ya know that Paul Dimmock could hold up and rob the Bank of England, never fire a shot, and get away with it—do ya? Well, he could. That's the only redeemin' feature about that bird; he's never shot direct at any one. But that don't let him out with th' dozen hold-ups in this man's city. He'll do——". The telephone bell ringing broke in on the discourse, and Bullard's feet hit the floor; he swiveled around to the desk and picked up the phone.

"Silvercreek on th' wire," voiced the chief from the corner of his mouth. "Sheriff Willis speaking."

Detective Briggs nodded and relaxed in his

chair, his fingers interlocked and thumbs twirling.

For the next five minutes the only sound that broke the silence was the ticking of the wall clock and the incoherent grunts—that would mean most anything—from Bullard as he listened assiduously to the long-distance information.

"All right," he finally said into the transmitter, "if you say Dimmock's not gona fight extradition, I'll send one of my best men after him. What's that you say? I'd better send a couple? Forget it, friend; the man I'll chase into your wilds is as good as two—or three, if it comes to a show-down. Good-by."

The chief hung up the receiver and turned to Briggs, who was still rotating his thumbs. If he had conjectured he was the chief's wonder-man, his listless demeanor did not indicate it.

"That was Silvercreek on the wire," the chief iterated, "an' here's th' whole story in a nutshell. Dimmock, the crook, was living on a little farm for th' past two years, he an' his wife an' a kid. His wife belongs in those parts, an' she's A-I. It seems that he met her when he called at her house to buy some grub. Dimmock's a good-looking cuss, Briggs, even got it on you," chuckled Bullard.

The "star" never batted a lid, just kept right on twirling.

"As it says in th' story-book: love at first sight, that musta been th' case with them. She was an orphan, her dad was th' last one to pass on, so she was alone. There seems to be a touch of nature about that lonesome stuff, so they got married. Dimmock says he told her all about himself, th' crooked jobs he'd done, and he had most of the Capitalist National Bank's loot with him. So the crook an' his wife musta worked and scraped till they made up what he spent, for one day he came into Silvercreek with a sealed package addressed to the bank, and was at the post office window having it registered. A guy named Stubbs, that knew him when he was doing a stretch somewhere, put the sheriff wise an' Willis pinched him. The sheriff is also holding th' money. Twenty-three thousand in all, he told me. That was what th' bank said they lost. I'll tell you another thing, Briggs: those guys at Silvercreek ain't keen on holdin' him. You see, he's well liked; never pulled off a dirty trick in their burg, an' his wife is a product of th' settlement. They swear by her."

"If we want to get him some one's gota take a trip West P. D. Q. An' you're th' *some one* that's a-going!"

Briggs puffed away silently, blowing spirals of smoke through his nose.

"Why me?" he asked concisely. "You know I'm to be married in a few weeks. Why not send Shane, or Nagle, or both?"

"Now you listen to me," snapped the chief with some heat. "I'm running this end of th' department! I know you're gona be married, an' I for one am damn glad! That'll maybe knock some of th' rotten gambling outa you! You'll be back in plenty of time; don't let that worry you none. And you know very well why I'm sendin' you, Briggs! You know I can't spare two men. They're both good men, but not good enough to go single after Dimmock! Do you get me, you thickhead? You know that you're th' only man I've got that can bring that hold-up marvel back alone! Gee, you make me sick, Jack! Get outa here and go an' see Margie, then get ready to take th' midnight."

CHAPTER TWO

MARGIE RYDER was alone in her newly planted garden when Detective Briggs drove up to the house in his flivver late that same afternoon. She was a comely girl of about twenty-three, and lived with her widowed mother in a trim little cottage a few miles out of the city. All her young life had been wholly devoted to the care of her parents.

"I am also sorry for them Dimmocks, Jack," she told him, as they sat together on the back porch and he had concluded his story. "I'm sorry for you, too, Jack; I realize how distasteful your duty will be, as they are trying to go straight. But you must not falter, dear. And you won't gamble, will you, for my sake?"

He promised her and meant it. Then he kissed the trusting girl and departed. As he

stepped on the gas he swore an oath; he meant that, too.

Two days later, as the sun was sinking in the west and casting its shadow over the plains, the train bore the Eastern detective to Silvercreek. Briggs, aroused from his lethargical mood, peeved and dust-grimed from his tedious ride across the silent waste, gathered up his suitcase and stumbled out of the car. On the rough-boarded platform of the dingy station he dropped his bag and viewed his surroundings.

"A bum place is right," he muttered as he wiped his sweaty face with his handkerchief. He turned to enter the station to get a drink of water if the beverage was obtainable, when he spied a bewhiskered individual standing in the doorway and eyeing him narrowly. Something about the native's scrutiny grated on the sensitive, overwrought nerves of the Eastern sleuth. A familiar hitching movement in his massive, stooping shoulders likewise aroused his detective instinct. He looked like a native, toted a six-gun, and was dirty-looking enough to be in "harmony" with the town.

"Any water in there?" asked Briggs, nodding his head towards the interior.

"Maybe. Better find out if yur want it." His tone carried antagonistic contempt that was substantiated by a leering up and down.

Briggs strode quickly into the stuffy room. He couldn't trust himself to have further speech with the lounger.

When he returned to the platform after drinking his fill of spring water that was piped into the station, he again encountered the pugnacious native.

"Where will I find the sheriff?" questioned the detective, picking up his suitcase and confronting him.

"Follow yer nose, tenderfoot; you'll find him," he snarled, squirting a mouthful of tobacco juice on the officer's shoes.

Briggs's face went livid. Every nerve in his wiry body was taut with resentment at the insult.

"You filthy skunk!" said Briggs in an outraged voice. "I didn't know your brand of polecat lived in these parts. You're spoiling for a fight, and you're goner get it. Put your hands up!" And as Briggs spoke the native struck.

It was the ancient ring trick of the foul fighter who, with the half-finished handshake of the opening round, smashes home a vicious blow. Only the square fighter's instinct in Briggs saw it coming, speeding swiftly for his jaw. Hardly discernible was the movement of his head, but the blow shot over his shoulder. His own right flickered in like a dart of flame. His left followed instantly, the last ounce of his steel-taut hundred and forty pounds behind it.

The native sprawled on all fours. But hardly had he landed before he sprang to his feet, blood oozing through his split lips. Poised and tense, his right swaying easily for the feint that was to be followed by another smashing left drive, the Easterner waited the onrush. But it never came. His face distorted with rage and glaring murderously, the native yanked out his heavy gun and raised it on the level with the detective's heart. Briggs stiffened at the coward's intention. But almost mechanically his hand dropped to his side.

Briggs wheeled, expecting he knew not what trick.

Behind him stood an elephantine form, his bow-legs wide apart, frowning heavily at the native. His eyes were cold—icy cold. In his hand he held a gleaming revolver, the frowning muzzle pointing at the native's midriff. Clear and incisive, vibrant with repression, sounded his voice when he spoke:

"This is th' last time I'm gonea give yo' warning', Stubbs; remember, th' last time. You ain't none too pop'lar in this town since yer showed up Dimmock, an' I had ter take him in. Get out o' here, an' mind what I tol' yo'.

"Who may yo' be, stranger?" he interrogated, fixing his chilly stare on Briggs.

"I'm th' sheriff of Silvercreek. My name is Tod Willis. What's yourn?"

"You are just the gentleman I was looking for," informed the detective, proffering his hand to the big officer. "I'm from the East. I'm here to get Dimmock." He then handed over his credentials and the warrant for custody of the prisoner.

After a careful scrutiny and several minutes of deliberation over the authorizing documents, the sheriff passed them back to Briggs.

"I'm shore glad t' meet yo', Mr. Briggs," announced Willis, after shaking the Eastern-

er's hand again. "But mighty sorry you're campin' on Dimmock's trail. But law is law, Mr. Briggs; so if you're ready we'll go over t' th' jail an' have th' fuss over?"

"Who's that guy Stubbs?" asked the detective guardedly as they strode along the dusty road towards a ramshackle two-story affair that Silvercreek citizens dubbed a jail.

"Oh, Stubbs?" answered the sheriff, without pausing in his stride or glancing at his companion. "Well," he drawled, "that hombre is just Stubbs, as far as I know. He ain't much good, nohow. Drifted in a few months ago from somewhere; we don't ask no one where they come from, so long as they live up t' th' laws of this yer community. I think he hails from back East somewhere; I dunno. I shore am calculating on sendin' him a-driftin' soon, 'cause there ain't no more grave room for his breed in this town."

They were now at the jail, the sheriff's office occupying the front of the building. As they entered the office a long, spare individual sprawled out on a chair and cleaning a revolver looked up from his work and nodded. Willis introduced him as Shorty, who, without getting up, shook Briggs's hand and went on polishing his firearm. The sheriff then unlocked a heavy door at the rear of the office, then beckoned to the detective, who found himself in a room that looked like a very durable prison. Four heavily barred cells filled up the major part of the room. The sheriff unlocked the end one and entered.

"Wake up, Dimmock," Briggs heard him call, and then he appeared with the sleepy fugitive.

"This is Detective Briggs from Rhode Island," Willis was saying. "He's come t' take you back."

Briggs was staring at the prisoner in wonderment. The man confronting him with hand extended was almost a replica of his late contestant. Colossal in bulk, he had a long black beard and dark hair on a well-poised head. But when Briggs appraised the man before him the comparison sank somewhere into insignificance. His broad shoulders were squared, his smile showed even, well-kept teeth, and clear gray eyes seemed to read the officer's very thoughts.

"Dimmock's no kin to that coyote Stubbs, Mr. Briggs," grinned the sheriff, noting the detective's startled look.

"You're right, sheriff; I'd lay a bet on that."

Formalities over and the warrant duly read, they re-entered the office to close the final proceedings.

Briggs shook hands with Willis. "Shorty," his deputy, had the package of money that he intended to ship by the Wells Fargo Express when the train arrived at Cheyenne. The detective turned to Dimmock and inclined his head towards the door, denoting his intended departure. The prisoner held out his hands to the officer, a pained look on his face as he glanced at the clock on the wall.

"No, Dimmock," said Briggs kindly, looking him straight in the eye. "I'm not going to put the cuffs on you; I'll take a chance. I'm somewhat of a gambler, and have never been deceived in my judgment of a man yet. I'll lay a bet that you'll travel back cuffless."

"Thank you, Mr. Briggs," Dimmock told him gratefully. "I was thinking my wife an' kid would be here to say good-by. You'll wait a few minutes, won't yuh?"

"Sure," affirmed the detective, "as long as you like."

A timid knock sounded on the door as he gave his consent. At the sheriff's bidding to "Come in!" a frail little woman rushed into the room and into the outstretched arms of the prisoner. Her sobs and his endearing words cast a spell of pity over the listeners. The sheriff turned his attention to a faded circus poster that was tacked on the wall. The deputy was rubbing his gun harder than ever. Briggs was gazing out of a grimy window, cursing inwardly, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder. Dimmock's wife was standing before him when he turned, smiling through her tears.

"You'll do what you can for Paul, Mr. Briggs, won't you?" she pleaded. "He told me what you just did, and, oh, it was so good of you. God knows Paul is not bad at heart. He's been so kind to me that——" The frail, grief-stricken wife broke down and sobbed aloud as Dimmock took her in his arms again.

"Don't worry, honey," he said softly, "and kiss little Paul for me. I'd a-liked to have seen him, but it's all for the best."

"Yes, dear, you've enough to bear. I'll bring him up to love his father as I do. Good-by, dear; may God send you back to me soon."

CHAPTER THREE

THE sun had sunk behind the stately mountains as the train carrying the Eastern detective and his prisoner pulled out of Silvercreek station. There was no gathering of natives to watch their departure except the station agent, who had flagged the train to take them aboard. No one saw the skulking figure that darted from behind a wood-pile as the last car was slowly leaving Silvercreek behind. He nimbly clambered onto the platform.

As the train thundered along the polished rails, leaving in its wake a stereoscopic panorama of fertile ranges swarming with cattle, Briggs dozed as his prisoner stared out at the fast falling night. When they climbed into their berths in the sleeper that night the detective was alert and wary. Once he fancied he heard the soft fall of footsteps stop outside, and in the dim light he would have sworn that the velvet curtains were drawn gingerly apart. Wide awake now, he drew his revolver from beneath his pillow and swung out onto the car floor in time to get a fleeting glimpse of a figure vanishing in the darkness.

"I wonder——" he soliloquized. "No, I can't believe it. Dimmock's straight that way, poor devil."

He looked at his prisoner, who was in the upper berth, and found him in a fretful sleep. The detective shook his head sadly as he turned in below.

As his lids closed over his tired eyes, and the dawn's gray light was breaking, he was thrown violently from his berth to the floor. Although he was stunned by the impact, he gained his feet and staggered toward where his prisoner was standing bewildered.

"I'm here, Mr. Briggs," Dimmock assured the tottering officer as he stepped to his side and steadied his captor with his powerful hands. "Are you all right?"

"Oh, yes," mumbled Briggs, shaking off Dimmock's hands and plunging into his berth, from where he brought forth the package of money and his clothes. The train was at a standstill now, and the few other sleepers in the car were hurriedly dressing and inquiring the cause of the sudden stop. Outside in the pale dawn sickly, flittering lights were seen here and there as the train crew hurried out. A negro porter entered the car and informed the startled occupants that the engine had run into a landslide, derailing it. "It will be many hours before the wrecking crew can be on the job, and many more before the tons of earth and stone can be removed to open a clear rail for the train to go on," he added.

Chafing under the compulsory delay, Briggs nodded to his prisoner, who followed him from the car to the roadbed. He was near a cow town, the detective knew that, for, as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but cattle and grazing land. To the north from where he was standing he could see above the wall of the morning mist the outlines of scattered wooden buildings.

"What place is that?" he inquired of a conductor, pointing towards the seeming place of habitation.

"That's a cow town named Bethoud. Jim Bethoud owns the Lucky Chance saloon and runs the town."

"Thanks," said Briggs; then he looked up at Dimmock and added: "Let's go and see the place."

(*Continued in our next issue.*)

The MERMAID and the PEARLS

by

Howard Philip Rhoades

JACK FOSTER, head of the Foster Detective Agency, debated as long as possible before assigning Marjory Barr to the case of the missing Perry pearls. True, Perry was his most important client, a man to whom he must give the best results, and this was exactly a case for Miss Barr. Yet Foster hesitated.

She had defied and irritated him only today, this slender, athletic, blonde girl, this exquisite creature who drank in his directions with a serene pink-and-whiteness beneath which coursed unknown currents. She might have been accused of a baby-doll perfection of feature only for that expression of keenest intelligence and the marvelous depths of those blue eyes, to the bottom of which Foster never had been able to penetrate.

Serving a man who made his living solving mysteries, she was to him the greatest mystery of all. Each crumb of information dropped she assimilated. But of herself she said nothing. Usually Foster shrugged his shoulders. But there were times like this morning. A reporter had asked information regarding the young woman who had made such a brilliant record on the smuggling case involving a society woman. A newspaper account of this would have made great advertising for Foster. But Marjory Barr shook her head. Quietly but firmly she refused to tell anything about herself.

Foster had felt like discharging her. But she was too valuable for that. He was wondering how he could discipline her when the report of the Perry case came in. At first he didn't want to send her, then decided that the best interests of the office left no other course open.

She stood before him, her locks of pale gold precisely coiffed, her cheeks faintly flushed, a perfect fitting black suit about her slender lines.

"There's a theft at the Long Island home of Whitman Perry, Miss Barr," said Foster. "You've come from Cleveland unexpectedly to be the guest of Arnold Abercrombie, the Fifth avenue jeweler. He is at Mr. Perry's house party. Learning of your arrival in New York from Abercrombie, Mr. Perry has invited you out."

She nodded.

"Nobody knows these pearls are missing except Perry and Abercrombie, from whose store they were purchased. Wilson will call you on the phone later and receive any orders you may have for assistance."

Again she nodded.

"Above everything, make it a swift, clean-cut solution. Mr. Perry is a multi-millionaire

and through his industrial interests gives us half our business. So make every effort to please him."

"Yes, sir," she said, and was gone.

He shook his head, muttering: "And they say women tell everything!"

Rosecliff-on-the-Sound, country estate of Whitman Perry, was an hour and a half out. Miss Barr arrived as the long July day was approaching a glorious sunset and taxied up a winding road overlooking Long Island Sound. At the road's highest point the machine turned into an artistic stone gateway only a few paces from the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea. Thence the way led back through a beautifully wooded park to a long, low white villa, the country home of the multi-millionaire.

The guests were enjoying the open, after a scorching day, on a terrace to the left. A man servant ushered Miss Barr directly to a small study in a detached wing. There she met a tall, thin, reserved man, who introduced himself as Mr. Perry. He presented Mr. Abercrombie, also a man of middle age, but short and stout.

Closing the door, and speaking in guarded tones, Mr. Perry said: "This case is unusual, Miss Barr, in that my daughter, Beatrice, who owns the missing pearl necklace, does not know as yet that she has been robbed. Mr. Abercrombie and, I believe, you will be at an advantage in working before any one is notified."

"But isn't she likely to miss the pearls in the meantime?"

"No. She has a necklace which she believes to be hers."

"You mean a paste string has been substituted?"

He nodded.

"Who discovered the deception?"

"Mr. Abercrombie. He passed my daughter's room while the pearls were being examined this afternoon, and paused to see the clasp which was repaired at his store only this morning. He saw the strand was false, but said nothing. He called his store and made sure the pearls Beatrice received there to-day were the genuine ones."

"Who brought them here?"

"My daughter. She came in our car. From what we can learn by guarded questions she came direct. Knowing how she prizes the necklace, I doubt that it was out of her hand. She probably placed it in her small safe until she showed it."

"When did she show the pearls, and to whom?"

"An hour after her return this afternoon, to Miss Caroline Elward, of Chicago, a guest; to her brother Duane, and his friend, Lloyd Dexter."

"Did they all look at them at once?"

"The girls were looking at them, I believe, as the young men passed. As the men left Abercrombie came. Miss Elward had the pearls around her neck, I think, and passed them to Dexter, who has traveled extensively, and who is interested in pearls. This Abercrombie pieced together."

"Dexter knows something about pearls, and did not see that these are paste? Who is he, Mr. Perry?"

"I never saw him before to-day. Duane, my son, met him at a club in the city recently. He seems to have the best connections."

"Where else have the pearls been recently, Mr. Perry?"

"Never out of my daughter's possession. No, I'll take that back. Duane had them once. They were in the family deposit vault at my bank for a short time. When we came out for the summer he brought them to his sister one day."

As she pondered he asked: "What do you think of it, Miss Barr?"

"I think you should tell your daughter. She might help."

"Impossible. She is emotional and attached to the pearls. If she hears of it she'll lose her self-possession and probably warn the thief."

"Pardon the question, Mr. Perry, but has your daughter ever had financial obligations that she did not like to bring to your attention? Does she play cards for money, or anything of that sort?"

"That's out of the question, Miss Barr. Suspicion of my daughter is—er—impossible!"

"I'm sorry. But I feel you want the truth, and nothing is impossible in such cases. How about her friend Miss Elward?"

"A Chicago society girl whom Duane met last year, and who has become very intimate

with my daughter. What do you think of it, Miss Barr?"

"Frankly, there's not much to work on, and we're handicapped by not having your daughter's help. But I'll do my best."

Eager for a plunge into the intricacies of this interesting case, Marjory Barr little suspected the disturbing personal element just ahead. Beatrice Perry, the daughter, appeared to be a fluffy, fragile girl of the sheltered type. On first sight she was just what her father had said. Marjory Barr wondered if she would ever have to change her opinion.

Lloyd Dexter was tanned, well-groomed and mannered, with the sophisticated handsomeness of a man of the world. It was when she met Duane Perry, son of the multi-millionaire, that Marjory Barr began to sense something strange. Tall, like his father, but much darker, with warm brown eyes which not only set off his broad trim frame but gave him an appealing sympathy, he gazed at her as if startled.

Certainly there was something more than casual in his glance and in the way she returned it. Still dazed and trying to remember, she met the eyes of the next in the group to which she was being introduced upon the terrace. They were enigmatic blue eyes, the eyes of a finely but somewhat heavily proportioned woman a year or two older than herself; a woman showily dressed, who glanced at her sharply for a fraction of a second, nodded in a restrained way, and then turned back to her conversation.

There were other guests. But Marjory Barr met them mechanically. She was trying to place one person in her memory to account for the presence of another. She was relieved when the group dissolved to dress for dinner. Evidently she was not the only person who had eagerly awaited the breaking-up. For, as she stepped to her right toward Mr. Abercrombie, who was sitting near by with Mr. Perry, she found herself face to face with one of the persons whose presence had pushed the quest of the stolen pearls almost out of her mind.

It was Duane Perry. Before she could utter a word he took advantage of the huge stone jardiniere with its trailing exotic plant which hid them and took her arm. "Won't you come a moment?" he asked, his brown eyes looking at her appealingly. "I want to ask you something."

Still struggling to remember when she had seen him, she allowed herself to be guided down a short stairs into a sunken way at one end of the terrace. As they reached the bottom step he spoke again.

"I met you over a year ago in the Café Blanc, east of Broadway in the theatrical district. Billy Mowery introduced us. You said you were coming again—next day. But you didn't—that or any other day. Nobody knew where you had gone. I waited, I longed. Finally I——"

Now she knew! There was a warmth in her deep blue eyes, too, as she looked up at him and said: "Finally you——"

"I met a girl who said she knew you. But she said she didn't know where you had gone. For your sake, half in the hope you'd come back, I clung to her."

A cool breath, laden with the fragrance of flowers from above, sifted down over them. Now, as she looked up her restraint and isolation had vanished. There was something in her eyes that Jack Foster, head of the detective agency, never had seen there. Evanescent though it was, Duane Perry caught it. Suddenly he put his arm around her and drew her close. "You're not Miss Barr," he said, with a great longing in his voice. "You're——"

He stopped short. Both strangely felt the presence of another. She was first to look at the stone balustrade above. His glance followed just in time. As the face which had looked down upon them disappeared he searched the eyes of the girl in his arms for some bit of evidence. "Miss Elward?" he asked. "Do you—do you know her?"

Her mask of blankness had returned. "What is the name?" she asked.

He repeated it. She shook her head. "No," she said, "I know nobody of that name."

"No matter," he said, drawing her closer, with a look of exultation, "I've found the girl I want"—he kissed her full on the lips—"the girl I'm going to have!"

Her unfathomable mask lost in a flush back of which played many emotions, she tore away. He retreated, too, hiding beneath his light laugh and wave of the hand the longing he felt to kiss her again.

The terrace once more became alive with figures moving like ghostly silhouettes against the purple shadows in the west. The faint breath of wind had died with the sun. The night was oppressively hot. Duane Perry, with two women upon his mind, sought them among the shadowy figures sitting and strolling.

To the west, at the end of a short avenue hedged with dwarf trees, now dark and silent, lay the great swimming pool which was the pride of the younger members of the family. Like an enchanted lagoon upon which the hand of parting day had etched in tones of blue and black, it shimmered faintly. At its edge, in the semi-dark, he found the two girls. Miss Barr stood like a statue, looking out where the ripples played. Miss Elward reclined on a picturesque stone bench at the water's edge.

There was a word or two between them, then silence as he approached. As they recognized him, Miss Elward rose quickly and came over. The other girl remained motionless. For Perry the situation was difficult. On one side clung the girl of whom he had seen a great deal for months. On the other stood the girl of mystery, who had thrilled him so strangely within the hour. What should he do or say?

Announcement of dinner relieved the situation. In a long, richly paneled room they were served a meal of delicate elegance. But, while most of the guests made merry and enjoyed themselves, there brooded over a certain few a question which banished spontaneity and made the meal merely an occasion for speculation.

More than one looked forward to the dance which followed. Screened by palms, an orchestra dispensed music dreamy and jazzy, while ladies in colorful evening dress alternated between swinging in the embrace of black-clad men and sipping cooling drinks. The heat remained excessive. Dancing only added to the warmth, and led naturally to the impromptu swimming party which was suggested later in the evening.

Duane Perry, with his predilection for things theatrical, had provided for such evening parties, which were an institution at Rosecliff, a spotlight with colored slides. Never had the vari-colored, ever-changing hues played down over a more picturesque company. The first to appear in a suit provided by her hostess was Marjory Barr. She seemed eager for the water. Duane Perry, not to speak of the others, almost forgot to go in as they watched her.

To see her at the tip of the springboard, toes delicately curled around the end, golden locks hidden beneath a pert rubber cap, her slim, tapering body, revealed in every line by a clinging black bathing suit, tensed for the dive, was to know her as a mistress of the water. The first long, deep, perfect dive of this radiant mermaid made them gasp at the length of time she could remain under water, then murmur in admiration as she came up and glided off in measured, graceful strokes.

Again and again she dove, inspiring more real swimming and less posing on the bank than usual. Several approached her in aquatic accomplishment, and among these was Miss Elward, who was constantly near Duane Perry, diving and swimming with the grace and ease which characterizes many society girls.

But if Perry was beside her physically, in mind he was with Miss Barr, burning again to see her alone. When the bathers left the pool he put on his things hurriedly. He searched the house for Miss Barr, only to see her disappear into the small study with Mr. Abercrombie. Then Miss Elward, who seemed ever near, approached, and they went for a walk outside.

Perry came in, certain this time he would be able to draw her aside. But now she waved back at him as she went upstairs, her arm about the waist of his sister, Beatrice. He would have to wait until to-morrow. But such necessity gave him little peace. His unsatisfied longing, his desire to unravel the mystery, contributed to his sleeplessness. Long after the big house was dark and silent he tossed. Often he sat up, stared out over the forested park, dim beneath the moonlight, heard the faint, far-off sound of the sea, breathed in the soft, sweet odors from the garden. One o'clock chimed from the village. Two o'clock was fainter. He was almost asleep. Then suddenly he started. Below a door had softly closed. He was sure some one had stolen out.

Duane Perry slipped on his clothes in an instant. The unreality which comes in the dead

of night, fed by his feverish fancy, put strange things into his brain, thoughts which bade him rise and search.

From a drawer he drew a flashlight. Softly he tiptoed downstairs. Across the broad drawing-room he stole, suddenly stopping in front of a door. Some one was entering. He waited breathlessly in the shadows. Then the door closed and the unseen figure came toward him. Perry pressed the button and shot a white ray into the face of the approaching one.

Before him halted, startled, his new-found friend, Lloyd Dexter.

"It's Perry, Dexter," said the man with the light. "What's that?"

He indicated two white pieces of something like ivory, one of which Dexter held in either hand.

"I—I don't know," said the other. "Just picked them up outside."

"Slips together, doesn't it?" asked Perry. He helped the other man, whose hands were trembling, to fit together what now showed itself to be a delicately wrought white case.

As Perry looked steadily into the face of Dexter the latter said:

"Where do you suppose it came from? I couldn't sleep. I heard somebody go out. I thought maybe you——"

"I never saw this before," said Perry. "Wait. Here's something else. A thin trickle of water." He examined marks upon the floor and outside upon the flagging. "Somebody without shoes," he said. "But they had stockings. The footprints point into the house. It's as if they walked in from the pool!"

"Suppose you look around outside," suggested Dexter, "and I'll see what I can find inside. We'll meet here in five minutes again. How's that?"

"All right," Perry agreed. He stole out into the night, while Dexter disappeared into the gloom of the inside. A moment later Perry paused hesitant. He looked back doubtfully. For the first time it began to dawn that something serious might be happening. Dexter with a white jewel case, a strange one, in his hands in the dead of night. It was queer. But it was too late to stop now. He hurried on to dispatch his side of the agreement.

Cautiously he skirted the border of hedges and ornamental shrubbery which circled the swimming pool. He was about to flash on the light and look for footprints when he heard a faint sound ahead. He went on. Suddenly through the still night came a low, persistent, weird, bird-like note. It was something which a half-wakeful sleeper there in the country hardly would have noticed. But to Perry, strangely aroused by the events of the past few minutes, it had a sound both significant and sinister.

Whatever the source of the noise, it had an immediate result. Just ahead of him was a rustle. As he hastened softly toward it there flitted past a small cedar of a curiously white and shining variety a dark figure. Perry rushed on by a short-cut. Coming around a low, thick tree, he almost bumped into a form which started back.

Instantly his flashlight was on. It revealed not the black-visaged cutthroat whom he had imagined but the trim, fully dressed figure of Marjory Barr. Instead of screaming or starting to run, as he would have imagined, she plunged forward, seized his arms and forced the flashlight down.

"It's Perry, Miss Barr," he breathed, catching her in his arms.

She stopped fighting. "I'm glad," she breathed; "that is, it might be worse. But for goodness' sake, don't light that again."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I can't answer," she said. "Please go into the house quietly."

Her tone indicated an eagerness to be rid of him. Why? There flashed through his mind something which connected that eagerness with the mystery which surrounded her; with his restlessness bordering on premonition that had prevented sleep; with Dexter, the open case in his hand; with the weird call which had just moved this strange girl in its direction. His love struggled with a doubt unconfessed.

"I'm going with you," he said firmly.

"You can't," she protested, trying to free herself from the arm he had thrown about her. "You don't understand. Go back—quietly."

"Not for anything," he said.

Realizing he meant it, she compromised. "All right, you may go on the condition that you obey every order I give."

"Surely," he agreed. "Now tell me who and what you are as we go."

"You're obeying orders? All right. First order: absolute silence!"

He laughed softly. They hurried on over the soft turf, clinging to the shadows until they were close to the stone gateway on the cliff's edge. To their right lay a small lodge dark and silent. Above were the stars, below the low, measured pounding of the waves on the shore.

"What are we waiting for?" he asked.

She laid her fingers upon his lips. Just then from the cliff's side, beyond the gate, came the same low, weird-like call heard a moment before. His arm was about her. She trembled within it. But it was a trembling of eagerness. Before he knew it she had torn away and faded into the darkness. He was after her instantly. His heart bounded in relief as he found her in the very shadow of one of the huge stone gateposts.

She silenced him again as he was about to speak. One warning hand upon his arm, she peered into the darkness. Her body tensed as she listened. Softly, then more closely, could be heard footfalls. Holding tightly to him, she drew back into the shadow of the great stone gateposts with the speed and silence of a cat. Close past them went a figure. For a second it paused in the gateway, then went on into the road which curved away down the hill.

The girl beside him advanced a pace or two, still peering after the vanished figure. Out of the darkness came a faint sound, a low, muffled voice. Beside Perry shrieked out the hoarse blast of a police whistle. It was at the lips of Marjory Barr, who leaped away from him and down the road on the heels of her summons.

Perry saw what happened after that indistinctly. From the side a huge, masculine figure was rushing in. Beyond two men were struggling with a third. In the centre was the dim figure of a woman engaged, as Perry neared, in a peculiar heaving movement. There was a swish overhead. A moment later Perry's flashlight disclosed the agitated features of Miss Caroline Elward.

"She threw them, Miss Barr," said the big man. "Went in the sea, I'm afraid," he added in vexation.

"You were slow getting to her, Wilson," said Miss Barr. "Go down and see what you can find. But first——" She nodded toward the other woman's wrists. Over them the big man slipped handcuffs. Then he and the other operatives saw the weeping, almost hysterical woman and the other prisoner safe inside the lodge.

The big man and one of his assistants scrambled down the side of the cliff as Marjory Barr, alone with Duane Perry under the stars, confessed her errand at Rosecliff.

"But you weren't a detective when I met you at Café Blanc," he said. "Miss Elward, whom I cultivated because she said she knew you, said you were an actress."

"If a vaudevile diver is an actress, I was one," she admitted. "So was Caroline Elward, as she now calls herself, although she probably always posed as a society girl to you. Strange how my memory of our old act gave me the clue. I approached her there by the pool just before dinner to try to learn her game. She was tossing in pebbles, as she pretended. She didn't know that I had seen the first 'pebble'—a large, flat, white one."

"Then it was she who was in the pool just now?"

She nodded. "The white floor camouflaged this white case which belonged to her. She was alarmed, perhaps suspecting that I had recognized her, and through seeing you speak to me. She wanted a place to hide the pearls until after midnight, recalling how we used to dive for things, and not foreseeing the swimming party."

"She dove, took the pearls out and dropped the empty case which Dexter picked up," supplied Perry. "Or was he——"

"No, Dexter's all right. I had the office check him, and it gave him a clean bill. But Miss Elward didn't take the pearls and drop the case. Ordinarily she wouldn't have been so careless. She was surprised and excited to have dived in and found the case empty."

"Empty!"

"Yes. I took the pearls from the case on one of my long dives this evening. I dropped them into the neck of my suit, closed the case and left it. Mr. Abercrombie examined the pearls and pronounced them the missing ones."

"Then how did she get them again?"

"Missing them from the tank, she surmised

I had them. Probably thinking me only an adventuress like herself, she had the daring to go to my room for them. I'd expected that and left everything unlocked. She is a crude crook, so crude that the yellow head of one of your father's housemaids on the pillow was mistaken for mine. I was outside, watching for the possibility of her trying to pass the gems to a confederate, an effort you have seen."

"But why——"

"Let me ask *you* a question," she said. "How did she get you to leave your sister's pearls somewhere?"

A light broke over Perry's face. "She was along the day I took them from the vault. She persuaded me to go after them earlier than I'd intended, then pretended to be afraid to have me take them to a tea dance we were attending. She suggested a jeweler friend of hers. We put them in his safe."

As the girl wrote down the name of the jeweler Perry pursued: "But why let her get the jewels back. That's what I don't understand."

"To make a stronger case. Nobody saw her put them in the tank but me. Just now four of us saw her trying to slip them to her confederate."

At that moment Wilson and his companion climbed back over the edge of the cliff. "Landed just ten feet from the water," he explained as he held out the pearls.

Perry seized the white strand which shimmered beneath the starlight. "They brought me you," he whispered to her as the two men started toward the lodge for the prisoners. "Now tell me; you are not a real stage diver or detective."

"I like that!" she cried. "I thought I gave a pretty good performance in both lines." Then, as she crept close to him and looked up with a smile, she said: "I know what you mean. No, I haven't always been. My Palm Beach winters and my special criminal studies gave me a basis when I needed it, after the death of my father, George J. Lyman."

"Lyman!" he cried, "of Newport and New York. Then you're the girl who was educated abroad, nursed in France——"

"The modern girl," she reminded, "makes her own way. After the crash came I had to——"

He caught her in his arms and whispered. There was a reciprocal warmth in her kiss as she answered.

"There," he cried, as he pressed her close, "I dropped the pearls."

"No matter," she said as he stooped to pick them up. "We only need these for evidence. Miss Elward slipped a paste string to your sister in the afternoon. To-night, just as your sister was going to bed, I admired the paste string and slipped back around her neck—the last place the thief ever would look for them—the real ones!"

KILLED 167 TONS OF RATS

RATS to the number of 670,000 were killed in Texas last year in the extermination drives conducted by the county agents employed co-operatively by the United States agricultural colleges.

The counties prompted many of the campaigns with the help of members of local farm bureaus and Chambers of Commerce and under the general supervision of Biological Survey rodent control specialists.

Some counties were divided into zones, and money was raised to be given as prizes to men, boys and schools killing the largest number of rats. The most rats were killed in Denton County. The boy having the greatest number to his credit killed 15,000 in six weeks. In Williamson County another boy killed 909 in two weeks. It is estimated that the rats averaged about a half a pound each, making about 167 tons of rats killed during the campaign against them.

It is also estimated that if each rat had lived a year it would, on an average, have eaten or damaged property worth $1, making the results of the campaign worth approximately $670,000.

A Tenor's Double

A MANAGER ought to possess: 1. The diplomacy of a Talleyrand, in order to get rid politely of petitioners for private boxes, importunate authors, patrons of ballet maidens, fanatic composers, starters of phenomena and producers of stars; 2. The stoicism of a Brutus, to resist the caprices and pretensions of the crowd, both feminine and masculine, assembled behind the scenes; 3. The self-denial of St. Anthony, to withstand the seductions of his actresses, and also the nose of St. Anthony's companion, to scent out promising attractions, possible celebrities, and whatever will draw; 4. The patience of Job, to support the demands of the public, the carping critics, and the jealousy of rivals and competitors.

The most knowing managers are naturally those who have previously served in the dramatic ranks themselves. One of these, an ex-tenor, who had made his fortune, and who during his vocal career, by his hoarseness, his demands, and his caprices had driven his employer half crazy, became, when he took a theatre on his own account, the severest of taskmasters and managers. The acquisition of power changes the nature of men, but very rarely to their own advantage. He would suffer no poutings or indispositions. The most trifling negligence was punished by a heavy fine. The least infraction of the terms of an engagement was met by legal proceedings—by gendarmes, if necessary.

When he took in hand the direction of the theatre of L——, the municipality imposed on him the condition of engaging the tenor Oswald, whose talent was remarkable, especially for feigning illness at will. When Oswald took it into his head that he would not sing, he gave himself a lever by means needless to describe, but sufficiently mysterious to puzzle the actors.

But the cunning old singer, who knew all the tricks of his trade, took his precautions in consequence. Every evening when Oswald sang he dressed up a good-looking supernumerary in exactly the same costume as the fickle tenor, with orders to make himself conspicuous behind the scenes until the close of the performance. The constant presence of this subsidiary personage grew into an actual annoyance to Oswald. So one evening, between two acts of the Musette, he asked his manager:

"Who is that fellow dressed up exactly like me, who always sticks himself in the way every night I sing? What does he do here?"

"He is your double—your substitute."

"For what purpose? On what account?"

"To take your place in case of need. Your health is so delicate, you may any day have a fever fit, or be seized with sudden hoarseness. I don't want to be placed in the cruel necessity of closing the theatre or returning the money taken at the doors."

"The deuce," said the tenor, slightly flabergasted, scanning his duplicate with sidelong looks. "Where did you pick up that musical animal? Has he any talent? Can he sing?"

"Divinely! Perfect phrasing! Splendid ut de pottrine! Pupil of Duprez. I discovered him in Paris. But you shall judge for yourself the first evening you feel a little out of sorts. He knows all your parts, and can take them at a minute's warning. We can hear him quietly in my manager's box."

During the eight months that the season lasted Oswald had neither a single loss of voice nor the slightest touch of fever.

The SCARLET SCORPION

by

Frederick C. Davis

A MAN walking rapidly down an eerily silent street late at night, alone, suddenly halted, took an uncertain step forward, and crumpled to the ground. Through the rest of the night he lay where he had fallen, motionless. When he was found seven thousand dollars in banknotes was seen to be missing from his pockets. And at a spot high on his chest shone a figure painted in brilliant, ineradicable ink—the image of a scorpion, a deadly insect poised to strike. Its vivid scarlet hue and its hideous attitude made the brand unforgettable.

Leaving the house of a dear friend late at night in company with her husband, and wearing her famous rose-ebony bracelet—more valuable by far than the most precious metal or gem—Mrs. Henry Hinderson was suddenly overcome by an obnoxious odor which filled her sedan. Her husband was likewise rendered unconscious. Upon bringing the automobile to a stop the chauffeur found both passengers like dead. On Mrs. Hinderson's forehead shone vividly the figure of a scorpion poised to strike, done in scarlet. Her bracelet had vanished.

The climax of these amazing and distressing events was reached not one month after the finding of the first victim branded with the scarlet scorpion. Sanderson, chief of detectives, was found dead in his office, a silver-handled dagger protruding from his chest and a scarlet scorpion painted just over the wound.

The city broke into a hubbub of indignation. What was the scarlet scorpion? What dastardly criminal was at its head? What was its purpose? Why did it operate, and, above all, how could it be stopped?

Not the least concerned over these seemingly insoluble questions was N. J. Banniger, detective.

Banniger left headquarters early of an afternoon not a week after the mysterious killing of the chief of detectives in his office. As he walked from the station a hail sounded behind him, and he halted to accost the speaker.

"Wait a minute, there, Banniger!" some one sang from within, and Banniger waited until the speaker came from the building and disclosed himself as Hendrie.

Banniger and Hendrie were inseparable. They were staunch friends, working together and playing together. They had worked hand in hand on cases without number, and the percentage of their successes had run high. They knew each other's nature as well as each knew his own; so, as they walked silently down the street in the direction of a disreputable

district of the town, they did not even think to inquire as to the other's thoughts. Each knew certainly that the scarlet scorpion occupied the other's attention.

Soon they approached a teahouse, an evil-smelling hole maintained by Lee Fu, celestial of doubtful ways and means.

Banniger perceived Lee Fu watch them as they neared out the corners of his slanting eyes. He was puffing placidly on a lengthy pipe, and continued smoking unperturbed as the two police officers came toward him. His yellow garments hung loosely about him, spotted and discolored; his hair was wound tightly in a reel on the top of his head. As Banniger and Hendrie halted before him he did no more than to shift one slippered foot a trifle to the rear.

Banniger slid his hand from his pocket. He held it, closed, before Lee Fu's dull eyes, then slowly opened the fingers. He glared keenly at the yellow man's face as the thing in his hand was opened to view.

The figure of a scarlet scorpion was disclosed to Lee Fu's view.

"What's that, Lee Fu?" demanded Banniger harshly.

Lee Fu puffed again on his pipe imperturbedly. "Red bug," he droned after a moment.

"Red bug, eh?" snapped Banniger. "Well, Lee Fu, that red bug's going to get you into a sea of trouble!"

Lee Fu, smoking calmly, did not answer.

Banniger paused, exasperated. He glared angrily at the Oriental's placid face, masking his unfathomable brain. He glanced significantly at Hendrie, standing slightly behind him, and returned his eyes to Lee Fu.

"Well, you yellow——" he began, and interrupted himself.

Simultaneously the two policemen leaped forward upon the unsuspecting Chinese. They threw their weights upon his shoulders, snatched his odoriferous pipe from his brown teeth, bore him to the ground. They ran their hands roughly over his clothing, pounded his body to see if any weapon were secreted under the folds of his garments; then, pinioning him down until resistance was impossible, Banniger demanded furiously:

"You damnable chink! What do you know about the scarlet scorpion, eh?"

Lee Fu had made no resistance, had permitted them to pounce upon him and search him as they liked. He had not uttered a sound during the attack. Now he narrowed his slanting eyes and said in his lazy, droning tone:

"White man treat Chinese vely rough."

"You cut out that innocence stuff!" Hendrie snapped.

"White man vely strong," Lee Fu drawled.

"Lee Fu," flared Banniger, "if you're connected with this damnable Scarlet Scorpion gang, by heaven, we'll get you!"

"White man vely strong," Lee Fu drawled again, as though not a thing in the world could break his placidity.

The two policemen glared at the celestial angrily. They saw at once that nothing could be obtained from the yellow man, that his calm was unbreakable, and that third-degree methods would fail before it as spears before Gibraltar. They glanced at each other, then arose, jerked the Chinese after them, setting him bodily on his feet.

Lee Fu smiled almost imperceptibly. "White man vely——"

"Shut up!" Hendrie snapped.

"Lee Fu," began Banniger, his face red and moist with anger, "if you—if you——" Then his disgust and his answer overcame him; without finishing his sentence he whirled on his heel and strutted away up the street, Hendrie following.

Three blocks away they paused and glanced back. Lee Fu was standing as before, leaning against the door of his teahouse and smoking placidly.

Together they turned the corner, and as they did so Banniger swung into action. He reached the next corner, and turned down again in the direction of Lee Fu's teahouse. Hendrie followed, unquestioning. When they had progressed two squares down the street Banniger suddenly turned and entered a vacant house to which he surprisingly held the key.

The house was a ramshackle dwelling, falling apart from age. Banniger turned as Hendrie entered, and locked the door again after

them. He turned to Hendrie as he dropped the key into his pocket.

"Hendrie, do you think as I do about this despicable Scarlet Scorpion gang? You believe it is Oriental in its nature—undoubtedly Oriental?"

Hendrie nodded. "I thought that from the first. N. J. Unknown stupefying gases, silver-handled daggers and such stuff point to an Oriental organization in back of this series of crimes."

"Good," Banniger said. "Besides, Hendrie, I've had a chemist analyze the pigment in which those scarlet figures were painted, and he says that it is made from a brewing of the bark of a shrub found only in eastern Asia."

"That's undeniable proof that Chinese are in back of these things," Hendrie agreed.

"You've had your eye on Lee Fu for some time, too, haven't you?"

"Well, you remember how close we came to getting him on that opium smuggling deal?"

"I do. But let me tell you, Hendrie, we'll come even closer than that this time!"

Hendrie pondered a moment. "We have to get some evidence on him, sure. What can we work for?"

"I can't say now. We'll have to work and wait."

"Why did you come here?" Hendrie asked after an interval. "You had a key to that door."

"Yes. Got it from the owner. Follow me, Hendrie. This thing might end sooner than we expect."

Banniger turned and led Hendrie through several barren, trash-littered rooms, evil-smelling and musty. Finally they reached the bottom of a broken flight of stairs. Up these Banniger climbed, motioning for Hendrie to follow. The stairs creaked as they stepped on them. They paused at the top of them and looked around. Banniger pointed to a wooden ladder leaning against a wall to the right.

"Leads to a trap to the roof," he informed Hendrie as he walked toward it.

He climbed up the swaying ladder; reaching the top, he pushed at the wooden lid which covered the opening to the roof, and threw it aside, revealing a square of sky, which looked refreshing from the filthy floor below. Banniger scrambled onto the roof, and in a moment Hendrie followed.

Then began a trip across house-tops. Treading lightly so that their footfalls might not be heard by the persons living below, they picked their way over the mountain range of shingles and tin until they paused over one which was flat and black.

Banniger crouched. "Keep low, Hendrie," he warned. "There are windows around here, and we might be seen from the street below. Don't go near the edge of the roof."

"Where are we?"

"Lee Fu's."

Banniger stepped beside a skylight which was raised a foot or so above the surface of the roof. He kneeled beside it, cupped his hands beside his eyes, and peered into the room below. Hendrie also kneeled and followed Banniger's example.

A thin, veiling lace-like fabric was stretched horizontally below the panes of the window, making observation difficult. Side by side, Banniger and Hendrie peered into the room, and in a moment detected motion below. Some one was moving about. By his slow, deliberate movements of the form in the room below the two policemen knew at once that the man was Lee Fu.

Lee Fu was garbed in a gorgeous robe. He entered through a door at the left and walked slowly across the room. In his hands he held a square glass cage—empty.

He went silently to a wall almost under the watchers. He fingered one end of the glass cage; seemed to be lifting a door. Then he pressed it against the wall of the room, centering the door of the glass cage with a circle on the wall. Then he raised his finger and pressed a spot on the wall. Something clicked, and the spot behind the door of the glass cage seemed to grow suddenly darker. Almost instantly something red shot into the glass cage in Lee Fu's hands.

He pressed the spot again; the little hole in the wall closed and disappeared. Lee Fu instantly closed the door in the glass cage, then held the box gloatingly before his eyes. A red streak darted over the transparent sides of the box, flying from corner to corner with lightning rapidity, until finally, bewildered, the

little red thing inside the cage halted and remained motionless.

The red thing inside the box was vividly colored, hairy in a horrible fashion, with long, bent, hairy legs and a globular body, quivering and trembling, with its tail stretching and folding with hideous rhythm.

"Merciful heavens!" Banniger breathed. "It's a scorpion—a scarlet scorpion!"

Hendrie was so fascinated by the sight of the exotic deadly insect which lay revealed in the glass cage held in Lee Fu's yellow hands that he did not comment.

Lee Fu turned majestically, and with reverence placed the cage on a high pedestal. He regarded it silently for a moment, then went to a bell hanging from the wall, took up a padded stick, gathered in his voluminous silk sleeves, and struck seven times on the gong.

The notes boomed reverberatingly through the room below. As the echoes of the last died away the door to the left again opened and a double file of yellow men entered, garbed in colorful robes of silk. They proceeded straight ahead, halted when the last had entered. Then the procession turned, kneeled, bowed their heads, and extended their hands in reverent prayer.

Le Fu's voice arose. It sounded high and strained. The rapid accent of the celestial came through the skylight to Banniger and Hendrie as unintelligible though apparently worshipful intonation. Then Lee Fu turned, kneeled himself, and bowed before the hideous red insect in the glass cage.

He spoke sharply. The others raised their heads, but otherwise did not change their position. Lee Fu arose. He advanced to dishes of incense placed on either side of the glass cage; he lighted a taper. At the flaring of the flame the red scorpion darted with lightning quickness to the side of the cage nearest the light; then, as the other pan of incense was lighted, it flashed toward its smoldering light.

Lee Fu extinguished the taper and turned. He addressed the assembled Chinese in reverent tones. They listened intently, keeping their rigid attitudes.

What strange and exotic ceremony was this? Banniger asked himself.

Lee Fu spoke rapidly. Then suddenly a purple light in one corner flared up, and he halted abruptly. As the light flashed the scarlet scorpion darted toward it. Lee Fu glanced quickly around him. Then he stepped with a long stride to the gong and struck it thrice. Without an instant's wait the prostrate yellow men arose and quickly filed through the door of the room. Lee Fu, with a last glance at the scarlet scorpion, stepped through the door also and closed it after him. The room, except for the quivering red thing in the glass cage, was now empty of life.

"That was an alarm!" Banniger breathed to Hendrie. "Something's happened; that was certainly an alarm!"

Then Hendrie gripped his arm. In an instant he glanced up. He saw Hendrie, his face pale, his hand extended and quivering, pointing tensely over the rise of roofs. Banniger's eyes followed his finger. As he looked he saw a face—a yellow face with slanting eyes and coiled black hair—disappear from sight behind a roof not thirty feet away.

Banniger glanced significantly at Hendrie. But Hendrie had turned and peered behind him. Banniger again glanced in the direction Hendrie stared, and as he looked the head of another grim Chinese dropped from sight behind an obstruction.

"We're found!" Banniger blurted. "They've found us! Now we know what that alarm was for!"

Hendrie glanced at him quickly. "On both sides!" he breathed. "They're on both sides of us! We're trapped!"

"Listen!"

From over the roofs came the sound of padded heels thudding against tin! From behind came the sound of running feet!

"They're closing in on us!"

Without waiting an instant, Banniger grasped their only means of escape. He gripped the edge of the skylight with his fingers and bent his weight to the task of lifting the heavy cover. It creaked and rose. Hendrie emitted a cry of elation. Holding the skylight open, Banniger signaled for Hendrie to climb through it. In a moment Hendrie had dropped through the lacy cloth hanging under it, and had struck the floor of the room below.

In a moment Banniger followed. The skylight slammed shut above him as he dropped through the distance below. Then, recovering his balance from the shock of the fall, he swung to Hendrie just as a pounding of feet echoed from directly above them.

"Now we've got to get out of here!" Banniger cried. "Those chinks mean business!"

They whirled on their heels toward the door to the left and stopped short. A man was standing in the doorway—a man tall, colorfully garbed, his slanting eyes glittering maliciously. It was Lee Fu.

He chuckled. "White man vely foolish!" he said.

Banniger took a step forward. Lee Fu at this movement darted a hand from his voluminous sleeve and signaled him back. At the same time he stepped aside, leaving the door open behind him. As he did so half a dozen yellow men darted through it and flung themselves on Banniger and Hendrie.

The policemen cried aloud and fell into desperate battle with the celestials. Their strength was nothing against the overwhelming odds. They fought madly and uselessly. They cracked their fists forcibly against yellow faces that seemed not even to feel the blows, and always they were forced backwards toward the wall. In a moment they were pressed against it. Ropes appeared magically, they were lashed together, their arms bound tightly to their sides, their feet pinioned to hooks in the wall. They were helpless—roped inescapably to Lee Fu's wall!

Lee Fu clapped his hands. At once the six Chinese withdrew and walked from the room. Lee Fu raised his eyes to the skylight and made a signal; immediately the sounds of retreating feet were audible. Then Lee Fu turned to his prisoners.

His eyes glittered and he chuckled. "White man vely foolish mans," he said again.

Banniger writhed helplessly in the ropes which bound him. Hendrie squirmed futilely to free himself. Their faces red and wet, they glared madly at the celestial standing so calmly before them and regarding them with such contempt.

Lee Fu turned his eyes away. He went majestically to a corner of the room and returned, carrying two tall candlesticks. These he placed before the two men lashed to the rings in the wall. He adjusted tin shades so that the light from the candle flames would fall only upon the prisoners. Then he struck a taper and applied it to the wicks of the candles.

As the flame of the taper flared the red scorpion in the glass cage darted toward it and halted, baffled by the glass wall.

Lee Fu noted the movement of the insect. He crushed the flaming end of the taper between his fingers, dropped it, and turned to the two policemen.

"Red bug," he droned, "like light."

He regarded them for a moment. Then, to the utter surprise of the two detectives, he dropped every vestige of his accent and spoke in clear English:

"Bannister, you're a fool! Hendrie, you're a fool! You are both fools. But you will not be fools much longer!

"Listen to me! You have stepped in upon the workings of an organization which no other white man has ever seen. I will tell you anything you wish to know about it, because your knowing it will be nothing to you. Men that are dead do not talk."

Banniger and Hendrie stared at the Chinese, fascinated.

"You see," Lee Fu resumed calmly, "the head of the organization called the Scarlet Scorpions. It is an organization reaching back into antiquity; it flourished before America was discovered, before Cæsar died. It has one object—the domination of the world. We are strong. In America we are stronger than any other organization in existence. In a short time we shall rule the world.

"We make ourselves known in various ways; you have seen some of them. When we meet opposition we overcome it. If removing that obstacle means the killing of a man that man is killed. It is very simple. A life means nothing.

"You have interfered with us. You have only to look forward to death—to *that* death!"

Lee Fu, his eyes glittering, raised one finger toward the glass cage. Inside its transparent walls the scarlet scorpion quivered and trembled in the corner nearest the candle flames, winding and unwinding its deadly tail.

"That," resumed Lee Fu's droning voice, "is the scarlet scorpion for which our organization

is named. No white man has ever before seen one; no one but us has ever beheld one. Before history began we gathered together in ancient China all the types of scorpions living. By an intricate series of operations and breedings we produced this scorpion, scarlet in color and more deadly than the deadliest snake or the deadliest poison.

"That little scorpion we worship. We breed them." He turned and pointed to the tiny circle on the opposite wall, from which the scarlet scorpion had darted. "Inside there, in a dark chamber, we have *two—hundred—more!*"

Lee Fu drew himself up until he towered.

"These scorpions we breed in the dark. They have an inordinate fondness for light. They at once turn and fly for the lightest spot in their vision.

"If I should set loose that two hundred they would speedily disinhabit this city. They are extremely difficult to kill; they exist on comparatively nothing. They are so deadly and so difficult to kill that if we had not carefully caged every one ever hatched, this entire sphere would have been in a short time depopulated!"

Banniger winced. Hendrie stared wide-eyed at the Chinese as he spoke.

Lee Fu suddenly stepped backward. "Look at those lighted candles, fools! Look! I pull the shades on the windows!"

Rapidly he made a circuit of the room, pulling the window shades down until every portion of the room was dark, except the bodies of the two detectives.

The scarlet scorpion in the glass box flattened itself against the glass in its intense desire to fly toward the light.

"You are very light!" Lee Fu exulted. "I press the button which opens this hole and the scarlet scorpions swarm out and devour you!"

The prisoners shuddered, utterly speechless. Lee Fu advanced toward them, pushed his leering face close to theirs, and with one lean hand tried their bonds.

Then, as the detectives stared, he went to the opposite wall, and raised his hand to the hidden button.

"Good-by, my dear foolish detectives!" he drawled.

He pushed the button.

The hole in the wall opened.

Then in the circular aperture a small bit of red appeared.

It grew larger; a scarlet scorpion was coming out of its lair.

Then it crawled forward, dropped to the floor, and crawled half the distance toward the writhing detectives in the circle of light on the wall.

As the first neared the prisoners a second scorpion appeared in the hole in the wall, and behind the second a third.

"*G-God!*" breathed Banniger.

Lee Fu, safe in the shadow, chuckled.

The first scorpion halted just inside the circle of light, not two inches from the feet of the captured detectives.

The second dropped to the floor and crawled halfway over the carpet; the third followed; a forth, a fifth, a sixth trailed after.

Banniger shut his eyes and went limp in the ropes.

Hendrie's eyes were wide and staring. They were not staring at the red insects crawling near him. They were fixed on one sleeve of Lee Fu's robe. When he had tested their bonds it had swept through the flame of one of the candles—*and had caught fire!*

As Hendrie looked the flame leaped up toward Lee Fu's hand and ran quickly up his arm.

Lee Fu's garment was afire!

Lee Fu screamed. He leaped barkward, thudded against the wall. The flame on his arm leaped upward and was fanned into a roaring blaze by the wild waving of the yellow man's arm!

The little red scorpions crawling over the carpet suddenly halted. The light of the candles was bright, but the light of the fire of Lee Fu's garment was brighter!

One and all they turned and crawled straight toward Lee Fu!

Lee Fu screamed again. Banniger opened his eyes, saw the Chinese's garment afire, his frantic and vain efforts to throw it off, the little red insects crawling toward the yellow man's feet. Then one of the scorpions crawled upon Lee Fu's beaded slipper!

Lee Fu leaped away. He sprang madly at his prisoners. He struck a candle; it tipped

and fell against Banniger. Its lighted end struck one of the ropes which bound him, and in a moment the rope was afire.

With a desperate lurch Banniger wrenched away from the wall, and the rope broke. He emitted a cry of intense elation and dashed the ropes from him. He pulled a knife from his pocket and sprang toward Hendrie. In a moment Hendrie, too, was free.

As the two detectives broke out the panes of a window and climbed through they caught sight of one unforgettable scene.

From a hole in the wall a veritable string of scarlet was pouring and winding straight toward a blinding blaze on the floor of the room, which writhed horribly.

Banniger and Hendrie climbed down, struck the adjoining room, and scrambled into the alley. They turned and ran up its length. Where a view of the teahouse of Lee Fu was possible, they halted and turned their eyes back.

Vast, rolling clouds of black smoke were billowing away from the building. Flames crackled and roared. Even as they watched the two detectives heard the screeching of an approaching fire-wagon. But it was too evident that the building—and everything inside it—was impossible to save.

For a long time neither man spoke.

Then Banniger said:

"Lee Fu was the head of the Scarlet Scorpions."

"And when the head is lost," Hendrie answered, "the body is at least paralyzed, isn't it?"

Banniger nodded grimly.

"That's the end," he said; "the end of the Scarlet Scorpions. But it was nearly the end of us!"

SEA REVEALS PIRATE HOARD

THE inhabitants of Paradelha, a tiny fishing village on the Portuguese coast some distance south of Lisbon, have been growing rich of late on what seems to have been hidden plunder of some long-forgotten pirate band. Some of them have gathered in as much as $1,000 worth of treasure.

That part of the coast of Portugal is suffering from the encroachments of the ocean. Many houses have been undermined in the last few years and have had to be abandoned. Sometimes big slices of dry land slip off into the Atlantic on a stormy night and the people wake up in the morning to find all landmarks changed.

This is what happened a couple of weeks ago in a furious gale. The waves washed far in over the upland and carried away vast masses of the upper soil, leaving the shelving beach a couple of hundred feet wider than it had ever been before. A fisherman walking along the edge of the strand saw something glistening in the sand and rooting it out of the ground found it was an ancient silver cup. He dug some more and found quantities of scattered gold and silver coins.

When the news got around the village the whole population turned out to dig. They found still more money, all dating back to the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. There were rings and brooches, crucifixes and jeweled chalices, jeweled sword handles and table plate. Nobody knows just how much the treasure amounted to, since the fisherfolk hid it as fast as they secured it, and when official inquiries were made every one denied his own share.

They are still digging, however, and an occasional find is made. The sea seems to have broken up the cache and distributed its contents over many acres of beach. Objects are picked up as far as low-water mark, and some are doubtless washed back from time to time from deep water.

It is believed that the treasure represents plunder from Spanish coast towns. It is said that long ago there were numerous bands of Portuguese pirates which committed depredations on a considerable scale both afloat and ashore and when Portugal was at peace with Spain they were obliged to be very careful and hide their plunder. From time to time other hoards of the same sort have been discovered.

Joe Grimaldi's Brother

IN Dickens's "Memoirs of Grimaldi, the Clown," this story of a mysterious disappearance is related.

Grimaldi was one evening in November called from the stage, when he found two strangers in waiting. They were young men of gentlemanly appearance, and, upon hearing the words, "Here's Mr. Grimaldi—who wants him?" one of them turned hastily around and warmly accosted him. He looked about his own age, and had evidently been accustomed to a much warmer climate than that of England. He wore the fashionable evening dress of the day—that is to say, a blue body-coat with gilt buttons, a white waistcoat and tight pantaloons—and carried in his hand a small gold-headed cane.

"Joe, my lad!" exclaimed this person, holding out his hand in some agitation, "how goes it with you now, old fellow?"

He was not a little surprised at this familiar address from a person whom he was not conscious of ever having seen in his life, and, after a moment's pause replied that he really had not the pleasure of the stranger's acquaintance.

"Not the pleasure of my acquaintance!" repeated the stranger, with a loud laugh. "Well, Joe, that seems funny, anyhow!"

He appealed to his companion, who concurred in the opinion, and they both laughed heartily. This was all very funny to the strangers, but not at all so to Grimaldi; he had a vague idea that they were rather laughing at than with him, and, as much offended as surprised, was turning away, when the person who had spoken first said, in rather a tremulous voice:

"Joe, don't you know me now?"

He turned and gazed at him again. He had opened his shirt, and was pointing to a scar on his breast, the sight of which at once assured him that it was no other than his brother stood before him—his only brother, who had disappeared under the circumstances narrated in an earlier part of these memoirs. They were naturally much affected by this meeting, especially the elder brother, who had been so suddenly summoned into the presence of the near relative whom long ago he had given up for lost. They embraced again and again, and gave vent to their feelings in tears.

"Come upstairs," said Grimaldi, as soon as the first surprise was over; "Mr. Wroughton is there—Mr. Wroughton, who was the means of your going to sea—he'll be delighted to see you."

The brothers were hurrying away, when the friend, whose presence they had quite forgotten in their emotion, said:

"Well, John, then I'll wish you good-night."

"Good-night, good-night!" said the other, shaking his hand; "I'll see you in the morning."

"Yes," replied the friend; "at ten, mind!"

"At ten precisely; I shall not forget," answered John.

The friend, to whom he had not introduced his brother in any way, departed, and they went upon the stage together, where Grimaldi introduced his brother to Powell, Bannister, Wroughton, and many others in the green-room, who, attracted by the singularity of his return under such circumstances, had collected around them. Having his stage business to attend to, he had very little time for conversation; but, of course, he availed himself of every moment he could spare off the stage, and in answer to his inquiries his brother assured him that his trip had been eminently successful.

"At this moment," he said, slapping his breast-pocket, "I have six hundred pounds here."

"Why, John," said his brother, "it's very dangerous to carry so much money about with you."

"Dangerous!" replied John smiling; "we sailors know nothing about danger. But, my lad, even if all this were gone, I should not be penniless."

And he gave a knowing wink, which induced his brother to believe that he had indeed "made a good trip of it."

At this moment Grimaldi was again called upon the stage, and Mr. Wroughton, taking that opportunity of talking to his brother, made many kind inquiries of him relative to his success and the state of his finances. In reply to these questions, he made, in effect, the same statements as he had already communicated to Joseph, and exhibited, as evidence of the truth of his declarations, a coarse canvas bag, stuffed full of various coins, which he carefully replaced in his pocket again. As soon as the comedy was ended, Grimaldi joined him, and Mr. Wroughton, having congratulated his brother on his return, and the fortunate issue of his adventures, bade them good-night, when Grimaldi took occasion to ask how long the sailor had been in town. He replied, two or three hours back; that he had merely tarried to get some dinner, and had come straight to the theatre. In answer to inquiries relative to what he intended doing, he said he had not bestowed a thought upon the matter, and that the only topic that had occupied his mind was his anxiety to see his mother and brother.

A long and affectionate conversation ensued, in the course of which it was proposed by Joseph, that, as his mother lived with himself and wife, and they had a larger house than they required, the brother should join them, and they should all live together. To this the brother most gladly and joyfully assented, and, adding that he must see his mother that night, or his anxiety would not suffer him to sleep, asked where she lived. Grimaldi gave him the address directly, but, as he did not play in the afterpiece, said that he had done for the night, and that if he would wait while he changed his dress he would go with him. His brother was, of course, glad to hear there was no necessity for them to separate, and Grimaldi hurried away to his dressing-room, leaving him on the stage. The agitation of his feelings, the suddenness of his brother's return, the good fortune which had attended him in his absence, the gentility of his appearance, and his possession of so much money, altogether confused him so that he could scarcely use his hands. He stood still every now and then, quite lost in wonder; and then, suddenly recollecting that his brother was waiting, looked over the room again and again for articles of dress that were lying before him.

At length, after having occupied a much longer time than usual in changing his dress, he was ready, and ran down to the stage. On his way he met Powell, who heartily congratulated him on the return of his relative, making about the thirtieth who had been kind enough to do so already. Grimaldi asked him, more from nervousness than for information, if he had seen him lately.

"Not a minute ago," was the reply; "he is waiting for you upon the stage. I won't detain you, for he complains that you have been longer away now than you said you would be."

Grimaldi hurried downstairs to the spot where he had left his brother. He was not there.

"Whom are you looking for, Joe?" inquired Bannister, as he saw him looking eagerly about.

"For my brother," he answered; "I left him here a little while back."

"Well, and I saw and spoke to him not a minute ago," said Bannister. "When he left me he went in that direction" (pointing toward the passage that led to the stage door).

Grimaldi ran to the stage door and asked if his brother had passed. The man said he had, not a minute back; he could not have got out of the street by that time. He ran out at the door and then up and down the street several times, but saw nothing of him. Where could he be gone to? Possibly finding him longer gone than he had anticipated, he might have stepped out to call upon one of his old friends close by, whom he had not seen for so many years, with the intention of returning to the theatre. This was not unlikely; for in the immediate neighborhood there lived a Mr. Bowley, who had been his bosom friend when they were boys. The idea no sooner struck Grimaldi than he ran to the house and knocked hastily at the door.

Grimaldi's inquiries were useless; and, strange to say, all future inquiries were equally so; and from that time to the day of his death he never heard of his long-lost brother.

A FACE IN THE MIRROR

by

Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

WHEN "Spanish" Joe Carvalho made up his mind to "get" Detective Wickes he went about the job with a thoroughness which, he was convinced, would leave no loophole for detection by the hounds of the law.

Spanish Joe was in his way a sort of genius; he had been an actor and a good one in a past that was shrouded in mystery; to the inhabitants of the "village" he was, however, known merely as a gangster, a ne'er-do-well, an undesirable citizen.

But Spanish Joe was an artist to his fingertips—long, facile, flashing fingers which, in a far different environment, had earned him a reputation second to none in other ways than by prestidigitation, for example.

Now in his cheap hall room in a questionable rooming-house at the corner of Perry and West Fourth streets Carvalho sat and meditated, gazing into a cheap mirror propped upward against a chair back, a dark frown of concentration on his sharp, vulpine countenance, barbered to the blood now, as always, the thin fingers twitching in a premonitory spasm.

Presently, thumbing in his coat pocket, they came out again, were raised with a gobbling motion to his lips, the frown was erased as if by magic, and Spanish Joe, all his faculties at full tide under the stimulus of the heroin, puffed now at his cigarette, rising from the bed to pace the floor as the plan was born and rounded to completeness in his brain. Again he stared at himself in the mirror, chuckled, grinning as a cat grins, without mirth.

He had always hated Detective Wickes; the man was everywhere; three times now he had thwarted the dark-faced Carvalho in the very act of pulling off a "touch" that would have made him. Twice, too, the gangster had done a "stretch" up the river, with the assistance of Detective Wickes. It was enough and more than enough.

Carvalho was well acquainted with the department; he was well and "unfavorably" known to every member of the precinct, from captain to "flatty" and probationer. And Spanish Joe knew, too, all there was to know about departmental procedure; perhaps, indeed, he knew a little too much about it. For instance, as to certain questionable "protection money," as it was vulgarly called, levied through the medium of certain hard-faced men who invariably wore hard derby hats and spoke with a rough surliness out of the corners of their mouths.

Spanish Joe, therefore, was scarcely in the

good graces of the bulls, aside from his varied activities as gunman, peterman, fancy sledge-swinger (an expert who knocks off the combination knobs of safes), and facer for his crowd. And the mob he traveled with tolerated, while they did not understand, Carvalho. To them, while he was just a "wop," he was a good man to let alone. He was a good rough-and-tumble fighter, aside from his known ability and recklessness in the use of knife or pistol.

And Carvalho's hatred of Detective Wickes had never been spoken, but it was there, deep down, like a still fire, a venomous flame. Some day he would get him, and get him for all time. And the day was coming, it was almost at hand.

Carvalho grinned now, turning that mirror face downward upon the chair—the slow grin of a man who is satisfied with himself and all the world. His plan had been made. Now came action.

He peered around the door-jamb with the inbred caution of the jungle cat, sniffed twice, a soul-satisfying inspiration, then, soundless and swift, he was down the stair and in the street. Then, head sunk between his shoulders, he was away.

CHAPTER TWO

DETECTIVE WICKES—he was about Carvalho's height and build—was leaving the station on his time off for home. The detective was not an ill-looking man with his ruddy mustache and the somewhat exaggerated side-burns he affected, the sole incongruity in an otherwise perfect departmental ensemble.

The detective lived alone with an elderly housekeeper in a rambling cottage hard by the sea. Behind it was a garden, and it was Detective Wickes's relaxation, if not his hobby, to tend that garden as a mother tends her child. But behind that garden, and between it and the sea, there was a place of danger—a quicksand; no man had ever penetrated its secrets, and tales had not been wanting of mysterious disappearances, to be solved only when those sucking hands would give up the secrets locked deep down beneath its treacherous green surface.

To-day—and it was coming on to evening—the aged housekeeper had gone to visit relatives. As the detective came briskly up the walk the sun, upon the edge of its setting, blazed blood-red upon flowered path and porch.

Twice, with the instinct of the trained man-hunter, the detective had thought that he was followed; there had been a man at the railroad station who had kept near him in the line under the train-shed. When the detective had looked at him the fellow had turned his head. And there had been something more than vaguely familiar in the very cut of his jib, Wickes thought, the set of his powerful shoulders, the carriage of his head.

Again, upon the lonely path homeward from the station, the detective had been conscious of a shadow, like a wind-blown leaf. It had glimmered a moment, moving as he moved from the greenery at his left. But the wind, rising, piping with a long wail landward, was stirring the treetops. The detective grinned to himself as at a fancy bred of the silence and the loneliness, the wind rustling the leafage, and nothing more.

But as he had come up the walk he turned—why, he could not have told—to see a flicking movement, as if a presence there had dropped suddenly, dodging behind the wall.

It was, in a way, a new experience for Detective Wickes, this being trailed, shadowed, and by what? For it had been but the shadow of a shadow, due doubtless to his nerves, too much coffee and too many strong cigars; that was it. He would have to call a halt.

But as he entered that lonely house—its nearest neighbor half a mile away across the dunes—he turned on the light, sinking with a sigh of satisfaction into an easy-chair by the window. Presently he would be about the preparation of his bachelor supper; meanwhile, rested a trifle from his walk, he mused there in the gathering dusk, his thoughts turning, oddly enough, to Spanish Joe Carvalho.

In a sling under his left arm-pit the detective was aware presently of the bulge of his service pistol; he took it off, laying it on a table at his elbow. And between him and the sunset glow again he seemed to see that dark-sinister face, with its high cheek-bones, trap-

like mouth, eyes with that still, smoldering brightness, like a painted flame. And the man had sworn to "get" him, the detective knew that well enough. But that was a part of his profession, his trade; he would not have been Detective Wickes but for that.

Yes, Spanish Joe was a bad one, no doubt about it, and, too, there was something sinister about him, aside from his avowed preference for the highways and byways of Criminopolis. Wickes remembered now, as a rumor, hearsay, and nothing more, that the yegg had at one time been an actor, a man of parts indeed, as it had been rumored, before drink and the devil had made him what he had become.

The detective had been meditating retirement for some time now, it was generally known. He had a tidy sum put by. He was a frugal man and abstemious. Resting now, for the moment he forgot Spanish Joe, his thoughts turning, as a man's thoughts will, to the long-deferred vacation which should be his when he would turn in his shield to potter in his garden or travel the wide world as a spectator rather than as an actor in its brief dramas of love and hate.

Rising now, he strolled outward, under the declining sun, into his garden, through it and beyond, to where that sullen quicksand glinted, a pale silver-green, beneath the low-hung stars.

Standing at the quicksand's edge, of a sudden he heard a faint, whispering footfall and hard-held breathing. He whirled, crouching, on the balls of his feet, in time to meet a murderous rush, the writhen face, the hand holding the pistol, to hear that voice—the voice of Spanish Joe Carvalho:

"Wickes, you damn dick, I've got you, an' I've got you—*good!* Now——"

The detective, grunting, lunged forward as a football player lunges, sidestepped as the pistol crashed almost in his face. He staggered, then his hand, in a lightning thrust, had closed on the thick, hairy wrist. There came a grunting heave and a heavy body catapulting backward in a long, staggering fall. There came a sudden sucking splash; the victor, staggering backward a pace, gazed with a face inscrutable at that heaving horror.

The quicksand had claimed its victim.

Presently, for there could be nothing served by waiting, the winner of that desperate, brief contest without witnesses moved slowly toward the house. A moment he stood, facing the sunset, both hands to his face, as if to shut out the vision of that viscid pool. Then, breathing heavily like a man who has been running, he stood a moment, the sun flaming on that mustache, ruddy-golden, the eyes haunted now by the stark tragedy of his enemy's swift end. Spanish Joe Carvalho had come for vengeance, and he had gotten it, there in that slimy pool, that unplumbed heaving bubble upon the rim of eternity. For men might dig and dig under sun or moon and never be the wiser, their shovels so many toothpicks.

The quicksand, silent under the rising moon, gleamed and glimmered, giving back its voiceless answer to the night sky and the stars.

CHAPTER THREE

DETECTIVE WICKES had turned in his shield following his report of that desperate battle at the quicksand and its termination. For indeed he had not come off without hurt.

"He'd never recovered from it," Vinson, sergeant of detectives, offered his opinion. And meeting the ex-detective later as he was leaving the station, it seemed to Vinson that Wickes was not himself. He voiced the thought:

"You're not acting natural, Wickes, old-timer," he told him. "A rest, though, will do you good; that's what you've been needing—a good, long rest and sleep—plenty of it!"

The detective, it seemed, had had enough, and more than enough. He was at last going on that promised vacation; it would be a long time before they would see him again; around the world and back at the very least, that was to be the programme. Vinson thought that his voice was curiously husky as the ex-plainclothesman answered him; the eyes, too, seemed haunted, strange, as if the memory of that sleeping horror stirred in them now with recollection.

"Yes," he said, and Vinson thought that his

voice seemed husky, strained, "I'll be—leaving soon—couple weeks—less, maybe. I—I've got it coming."

And his voice, with that curious husky overtone, slurred off now to a burring mumble; he turned abruptly, striding off with his swift, silent jungle step.

Vinson stared, gazing after the departing figure with a slow headshake.

"Well, he's needing it, and no mistake," he muttered to the empty air. "But I don't know."

He turned, striding inward to the office of the chief, his gaze thoughtful.

Spanish Joe was gone; men would see him no more. But there was nothing particularly strange in his disappearance; for days at a time he had had a habit of disappearing, losing himself on some distant job—that was his way—to appear again abruptly, with a casual greeting, in the haunts, the purlieus that he affected.

But as for Detective Wickes, the ruddy-golden mustache, the sideburns were less and less in evidence. And to the few whom he met he was reticent, taciturn, morose almost, one might have said, seeming indeed to avoid contact with his fellows.

But that night, and for several nights thereafter, in the solitary house upon the dunes, he busied himself with a strange evocation—for him. His housekeeper, deaf, nearly blind, feeble, and old, was not aware of it; in a little while now her occupation would be gone with the departure of the man who sat there, under the shaded lamp, writing, writing.

And as he wrote, tracing the lines with the laborious care of a schoolboy, halting and slow, he muttered to himself, whispering the words in a sort of exultation:

"Well, now, that's pretty good; that's the real thing, the real thing!" And again: "The pen is mightier than the sword—the sword."

It might have been that the hurt that he had received in that last man-to-man encounter was telling on him; perhaps it was. Now, with a quick oath, he swept the papers, the bankbook, together on the table, rising from his seat. The crone was in the doorway.

"Your supper is ready, sir," she said.

He rose, scowling, walking inward to the table, sitting down heavily, his large hands dark against the napery, his face dark under the lights. The housekeeper served him in a trembling silence; it was her custom; then she recoiled at his abrupt exclamation:

"This—omelet—I cannot eat it, woman! I never——"

"But, sir," protested the crone in a mild surprise. "But, Mister Wickes, it is your favorite!"

The heavy brows drew together in a quick frown.

"Why, yes, of course, Mrs.—Mrs. Ogilvie—it is—yes—it's my—favorite—but it ought—it ought—— Well, never mind, ma'am, I'll—that's all right."

But it was not what he had meant to say when interrupted. What *was* the matter with him? Nerves and Gregory Wickes! The thing was absurd, unless, of course, it was a case of too much coffee and too many strong cigars. But his hand shook as with a sudden palsy; the heavy nose above that paint-brush mustache twitched suddenly, pinched and old, his face the face on a sudden of an old man or of a man who is abruptly ill.

Finishing his dinner in silence, he chose from a long black case a long, thin foreign cigar, lighted it, to hear, as from dim leagues of distance, the voice:

"Your pipe, sir; it's on the mantel; you've forgotten, sir."

He rose, groping along the mantel like a blind man, found the pipe, put it in his pocket. The woman with a brief good-night departed. Left to himself in an armchair by the fire (it was a chilly night of late fall), for a moment the man who had been Detective Wickes put off his mask; his face showed in the firelight, curiously old and shrunken; there was a look in his eyes as his gaze roved around the long room, as if he was seeing that room for the first time—as indeed he was—for it was the first time he had viewed that room as some one other than Detective Wickes of the Thirteenth Precinct.

For that was of the past now; to-morrow he would pay a visit to the bank, his bank, be paid in full; after that it would be: out, beyond, London, Paris, and the Seven Seas, doubtless.

He rose, snapping out the light with fingers that trembled, brushing that ruddy mustache

with a little clicking movement. He began to mount the stairs to his room.

It was an old house, odd, full of strange and sudden surprises. The stairs, when halfway up, stopped abruptly at a little landing. Reaching this, he stumbled, recovered, bringing his foot down heavily as a man will who thinks there is still another tread to be surmounted. Well, he must be getting old; that was it.

But, reaching his room, his hand in the darkness fumbled at the knob; the door swung open; groping, he caromed against the bed, recoiling with a muttered oath. This bed was placed but a few feet from the door, and that was a bit unusual, but in the darkness one loses absolutely his sense of direction; the darkness plays strange pranks.

He lit the light, undressing with an odd, fumbling haste, staring at the wall just across with its paper pattern of blood-red roses. Here, just opposite the foot of his bed, the wall between two closets was vacant; the wan fingers of the moonlight, entering the window now, shone full upon it. And with the snapping out of the light the moonsheen, like a leprous-silvered finger, made of those blood-red roses dark gouts of—blood.

At length, while the moon mounted high above the rooftop, he fell into an uneasy sleep, his rest colored and distorted by fantastic and hideous dreams.

CHAPTER FOUR

WICKES'S housekeeper had been making some changes in the old house on the dunes. Now, while the ex-plain-clothesman had departed for the city, she, with the assistance of a neighboring man-of-all-work, had had her master's bedchamber "done up"; there had been much moving and removing of heavy furniture, and all this at Wickes's order, given a day or so prior to that fateful encounter at the quicksand.

With the aged housekeeper an order was an order; it made little difference that her employer was leaving for a long journey at any moment now; his instructions were being followed to the letter, and that was all.

And at about the time that this was happening the paying teller of the Second National Bank looked up from his wicket to see a face which he knew; there was no mistaking that ruddy mustache, the sideburns.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Wickes!" greeted the teller urbanely. "And what can I do for you this fine morning?"

Then, at the low answer of the man opposite, the teller answered him with the faintest of frowns:

"Ah! *All* of it, sir?"

The tones that he knew so well again answered him, but with a curious hoarseness, a huskiness somehow in keeping with the eyes, the loom of the soft hat, doubtless, shadowing the face to a pasty grayness.

"All of it—yes. I'm leaving—on a trip. Yes—thanks."

Twenty-two thousand dollars—that was Wickes's account in full; well, a man might travel far and fast with such a sum, and live in comfort, for a while, at any rate. The teller was thumbing the bills; their saffron edges crisped with a pleasing rustle; most of them were new. The official counted them again, scrutinizing the check with a perfunctory survey; then he handed that twenty-two thousand through the wicket.

For an interval there was a little pause. Then:

"Well, pleasant trip, Mr. Wickes; it's 'mister' now, as I understand. Well, good luck!" Again he spoke, out of the corner of his mouth: "Signature a little shaky—ha? Too much coffee, and too many strong cigars, I'll wager!"

The teller contrived a knowing look, as if implying that, man to man, there were other things besides coffee and cigars to set a man's hand in a tremble. He grinned amiably as that ruddy mustache and those flaring sideburns—they were, after all, simply a somewhat ministerial effect favored by a number of men—faded from his view; he saw the broad back in the doorway.

The teller, still chuckling, turned to his accounts as his ex-customer, now clear of the bank, dove suddenly into the protection of an alley at his right.

There was a little shop further along, scarce visible in the dimness; thither the man who

had been Detective Wickes, moving as if upon familiar ground, hastened his steps. The swing doors slatted outward with a clatter; there came the voice, hoarse and a trifle strained:

"Three fingers, Charlie; shoot me three fingers, quick!"

The man behind the stained and battered bar stared; then he vented a low whistle.

"Welcome, stranger!" he said softly, producing a bottle and glasses. Then he lifted himself upward to the bar, peering over the swing doors into the street.

"Jus' wanted to make sure; that's all, pal," he explained. "That young harness-bull, Haggerty; he might a-taken a notion t' have a look—see. Well, here's lookin' at you!"

Some minutes passed; they slipped on to hours; darkness had fallen when the figure in the soft hat, ruddy mustache invisible in the gloom, lurched, staggering a little, into the alley. A moment he stood, hand raised to his lip; then, at a slouching shuffle, he was away.

CHAPTER FIVE

MIDNIGHT. And a blight of darkness that was like smothering velvet made, say, for the prowling of jungle cats, furtive and swift. The house upon the dunes, a dim blot of shadow against the deeper blackness of the lonely countryside by night, brooded, silent and somehow sinister, waiting.

A gate clicked and a dim bulk went up the path and in at the door. A moment there sounded the clinking of the key; then the door swung wide, and the prodigal-for-a-day had come home.

But it was to be his last night. To-morrow he would be off, away, free, his past forgotten, and forgotten, too, the memory of that tragic interval at the quicksand's edge. His housekeeper slept "out"; he was alone. Ascending the stairs, he found his room, this time without a repetition of his previous blundering, undressed with a fumbling haste, still in the darkness, and got into bed.

At first sleep was slow in coming. That face of the man who he had killed was haunting him; he could see it against the black wall of the night, lips drawn backward from the teeth in a soundless snarl; eyes, staring eyes, until blotted out forever by those unplumbed depths. And then, written in letters upon the darkness, he saw them, the words, the sentence, as it might be, of doom:

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

He heard them, or he thought that he did, but the secret vice that he had nourished, battle or what-not, was it not responsible? He had killed a man, but it had been in a fair fight; and, besides, as Detective Wickes, was there any man to say that he had done ill? None surely.

A chill wind rising clamored at eave and shutter; it shouted in the chimney now with the voice of a giant; the casement shook as if in the grasp of an impatient, angry hand.

And then abruptly all sounds blurred to a fading monotone; he slept.

An hour passed, and the moon, rising, silvered that dreaming room a leprous whiteness; the sleeper stirred, moaned, put forth an arm, groping blindly in the blackness of the room.

The moonlight, in an ardent flood, an impalpable current of pale silver, like a bridge of dreams, swung downward to the window. It came in, touching the face of the sleeper with a lance of flame, turning the mustache, ruddy-golden, to blackness, the face to marble; the lance-tip widened, like a sword, thrusting inward across the flooring, the bed.

Abruptly the sleeper awoke, eyes wide with the horror that was upon him, out of the dark. For there, even as he looked, at the foot of his bed, there hung a face, like a face without a body, and it was—it was the face of the man whom he had killed!

Now in that ghostly radiance the face *moved;* it was coming toward him, and upon it was the same expression of horror and surprise that it had worn when——

"Dead men rise up never." A lie; it was a lie, a cheat, for this was no figment of the imagination; it was real; it was—it was——

For the masquerader it had struck twelve. With a windy shriek Spanish Joe Carvalho fell backward upon his pillows, the mounting tide of his alcoholic frenzy culminating in an over-

whelming wave of insane and blasphemous mouthing; the grim justice of a retributive madness; the rotten heart of him silent forever with the sight of the man whom he had killed. For the face which he had seen had indeed been that of Wickes; and yet as in a glass darkly, for, by a strange, retributive, poetic justice, he had seen it with his own eyes indeed: the mustachioed image of his victim, the perfect likeness which he had counterfeited, the speaking likeness indeed which he had put on there by the quicksand and since retained—*reflected in the mirror which in his absence the housekeeper had placed in the blank space between the closets at the foot of Wickes's bed!*

ODD DISGUISES IN JAIL ESCAPES

THE prisoner in Rome who escaped from jail by assuming the slight disguise of glasses and walking out with dignified steps in the guise of his own lawyer was equaled in audacity by an inmate of Chelmsford Jail, says the *Daily Mail*. A few minutes before 2, on a day in January, 1914, a well-dressed man walked up to the warder at the gate, and said, "I am going off now. I have finished repairing the organ. My name is Griffin."

As a matter of precaution, the warder looked in his visitors' book, and could not find the name of Griffin. Though he knew that repairs were being carried out on the organ, he thought best to telephone across and find if Mr. Griffin had been in the prison that morning.

Just then another warder happened to come up, and at once recognized the alleged Griffin as a prisoner.

Disguise of some sort is the first necessity for an escaping prisoner, and here the man had succeeded in stealing a suit of the warden's clothes.

One of the cleverest tricks of the kind was that played some years ago in Glasgow by a man who escaped in nothing but a suit of underclothes.

In the early hours of a Saturday morning in the year 1909 a scantily clad figure was seen speeding along Duke street, Glasgow, and was taken by the drivers of the milk carts, and even by the policemen, for a local Marathon athlete out for an early spin.

One little boy, sharper than the rest, rang the bell at Duke street prison and told the warder, "One of your prisoners is out and is running along the Cumbernauld."

He got no thanks for his news and was told to "go awa hame." By the time the boy's story had been proved to be true the prisoner had got clear, and it took a fortnight to recapture him.

It is said that no prisoner has ever made his escape from Portland, but there was one who was stopped only by the merest accident. This was a man who was serving five years for horse stealing.

He was employed as cook in the quarters of the bachelor officers, and this gave him a certain amount of liberty. One morning he managed to slip unseen into their quarters, and to secure a complete change of clothes, including a silk hat.

He had timed his change against the minute when he knew that one of the tradesmen from Weymouth would be calling at the house of the governor, and as soon as the man went in, up went the prisoner over the wall, which he climbed by means of a ladder.

He then drove straight toward Weymouth, and it was only the mere chance that the harbor bridge was under repair that stopped him, and enabled the police, who had been warned by telephone, to catch him.

A man known as "The King of the Jewel Thieves" went one better than either of the last two when he made his escape from Exeter Jail. After making a hole in the wall of his cell, he managed to get onto the roof of the governor's house. Wrenching open a skylight, he got into the house and stole the governor's overcoat and cap.

Wearing these, he walked calmly away, and got as far as Newton Abbot before a constable recognized him and recaptured him.

At the B. H. M. Club

By D. C. RETSLOFF

A BLUE-COATED policeman was pacing back and forth on the wide cement porch that stretched across the front of the B. H. M. Clubhouse. I paused at the bottom of the steps and looked up at him. He paid no more attention to me than he did to the little green lizard that lay sunning itself on the flat balustrade. The clock struck eleven while I stood hesitating; a moment later I hurried up the broad steps and pushed open the door.

Sugamanta, the Japanese house boy, short, thin and trim, came to meet me. Unconsciously, as I noticed his military bearing, I thought of the mission that had taken me to Japan and kept me there for six months.

Something gave me an uncomfortable feeling as Sugamanta bowed, sucked in his breath, and reached his brown hand out for my luggage. His small, slant eyes searched my face, and he almost paralyzed me by saying: "Major Clairmont, he's dead."

"What?" I gasped.

With a half-frightened glance around he repeated in his almost perfect English: "Major Clairmont, he was murdered this morning."

"You don't say so?"

Again he looked behind him and answered: "Yes."

"Where?"

But with my suitcase and bag he moved hurriedly up the stairs, followed by Heck, the tall, red-haired telephone boy. Through the French doors opening into the billiard-room at the end of the hall I saw several men.

Ned Benson, Jack Williams, and Ed Harney turned as the latch of the doors clicked under my shaking fingers. "Hello, Jennings," said Benson, advancing to meet me. "Loaded down with data on the Shantung province and the Island of Yap, I s'pose?"

Noticing that my eyes were focused on something at the other side of the room, he lowered his voice and continued: "Sort of a gruesome homecoming. Your old friend, the major, has designed his last fort. He was murdered this morning. Want to see him?" We crossed the hard-wood floor. Ned pulled back a sheet, and I looked at the tall, still form of the president of the B. H. M. Club stretched out on the green felt field.

"Tough luck on the major," said Ned. "A murder always chills me to the marrow."

"You'd never do to go where I've just been," I replied. "In Japan murders are every-day occurrences, and suicides are frequent, especially in military circles. Hari-kari, the way they have of killing themselves, is most revolting."

"I've read about it," said Ned, "but I imagine it is rarely done."

"You are wrong. It is a frequent thing for the Japanese government to consider a member of the official class worthy of death. They notify him and order him to perform the hari-kari. It consists of cutting two gashes in the abdomen. The wound resembles a cross and results in almost immediate death," I explained.

"Terrible," said Ned, drawing up the sheet over the tanned face with its gray mustache.

"Any idea how this happened?" I asked.

"Some one struck him from behind, that's about all," Ned replied. "I saw the body. I was there when the coroner came. He found a bruise and broken skin at the base of the brain, and decided that a heavy blunt instrument had been used."

"Robbery?" I half questioned.

Ned shook his head. He slowly filled his pipe, and motioned me to follow him. "We're supposed to keep in pairs and watch each other," he said. We sat down on a window seat in the hall close by the front door. "No, it was not robbery, Jennings. The major's watch, ring and stick-pin were left, and quite

a lot of silver money. I hate to mention this to you, but things don't look very good for your cousin, Fred Hammond."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"I mean—— Look here! Shall I tell you the whole affair?"

I nodded.

"You know, the major was not unpleasant nor dull. In fact, he could be extremely courteous and remarkably interesting."

"What's that got to do with Fred?" I interrupted.

"Wait till I get through. You remember when John Stanford proposed your cousin for membership into the club the major objected. He said that Fred was too young a man to join, even if he was bald, and he has always fussed more or less about it. Since he's been presiding officer I've laughed a great deal at the day he's boasted about being president of the only bald-headed men's club in the world."

"What has that to do with the murder?" I asked rather impatiently.

Sugamanta, followed by the red-haired boy, came over to the door near the window seat and began polishing the lone plate-glass panel. He kept casting furtive glances our way. We changed our seats.

"Listen, Jennings," Benson said as we settled down in the deep leather rockers. "Last night the major and Fred quarreled because Fred's hair is growing in."

"But he was as bald as an egg when he joined the club," I said. "The doctors told him that his hair would never grow again, and who would think it after two years?"

"That is what I heard Fred tell the old man."

"And then?"

"Then Clairmont called Fred a liar and demanded that he resign from the club. Fred said that he'd see the major in hell first, and made some references to the old man's past, and finally ended by asking him where he'd hidden something. I didn't catch what it was, but the major jumped from his chair and shook his fist at Fred as he half screamed, 'Ask me that again and I'll brain you.' When I came in to breakfast this morning I heard Fred say, 'If you don't hand it over to me by noon you'll find I've made no idle threat.' The major got up from the table, and as he passed behind your cousin's chair he bent down and spoke to him in a whisper. Fred's face went livid. 'That's a lie, damn you,' he said. Clairmont laughed sarcastically and went out. Soon after one of the gardeners found the major dead. He was lying full length between the big rhododendron bushes just off the path leading to the golf course. Of course we are all suspected more or less; everybody is watching everybody else."

"Where's Fred?"

"In the smoking-room. You can't see him," he said as I rose from my chair.

"Why not?"

"Because some of the other members caught snatches of the quarrel and were indiscreet enough to mention it to the police. That's Sergeant O'Brian over by the door. He told Fred to go in the smoking-room, and I've noticed that he keeps the others out. There's not the slightest doubt in my mind but that Fred will be arrested."

A low roar reached our ears, and almost immediately a powerful roadster swung along the drive and stopped with a sliding moan at the clubhouse steps. Two men entered as Sugamanta opened the door.

"The detectives," said Ned. "The big one is Terry Conners, the brilliant star of the force. He has a great reputation. They say that he can smell a criminal just as we ordinary humans can scent a skunk. He came here a few months ago from Cleveland, worked on the McCleary robbery, and brought the two crooks back from Argentina, single-handed. I know him. Let's go in.'

Terry Conners was big and heavy with peculiar longish-shaped eyes and a square chin.

He stood looking at the dead man as Ned and I paused just inside the door. Ed Harney and Jack Williams had carried the body from the shrubbery and were still in the room.

The detective shrugged his thick shoulders as he took the postmortem statement from the hands of a stenographer who came in behind us.

"Hello, Benson," he said, glancing quickly at the typewritten lines. "Do you happen to know whether the major had any enemies or not?"

"No," Ned answered. "I don't know of any one who would murder him."

"Do you know of any person in army circles who would be benefited by having the major out of the way?"

Again Ned said "No."

"Friendly with all the club members?"

Benson hesitated, Harney broke in: "We heard the major and Fred Hammond rowing last night and again this morning."

Conners's eyes narrowed. "Fred Hammond, who is he?"

"The youngest member of the B. H. M. Club," replied Harney, "and in the same branch of the service as the major."

"What were they rowing about?"

"Club membership and hair."

"Hair!" Conners exclaimed, immediately squelching the surprise in his voice. "Tell me about it."

"Benson heard more than the rest of us. He was at the breakfast table with them this morning," said Harney.

The detective drew up a chair and sat down. "Tell me," he directed.

"Surely you don't suspect Fred," I ventured.

He lifted his shoulders in a peculiar manner. "I suspect everybody," he answered quickly. "The major was killed by a man. He was killed for one of three reasons—hatred, jealousy, or money." He lighted a cigar carefully and studied the smoke rings for a second or two. The rest of us sat down near him and waited.

"Now, Benson, who is Fred Hammond, and what were he and the major quarreling about? Tell me all you know."

I saw Ned's eyes close for a moment. The color left his face, he tapped the arms of his chair. "I don't know much more than the others do," he said. "Two years ago Fred Hammond joined the Bald-headed Men's Club on the recommendation of John Stanford, a prominent attorney. At the time the major objected on account of Fred's youth. When Henry Holm, Rob Rosenbrok, and Dave Sigbee founded this club it was for mental workers over forty, who had become bald by excessive brain work. Fred Hammond was only twenty-five, but the doctors had pronounced him permanently bald, so much against the major's wishes we voted him in. Fred is a designer of forts and works in the same office with the major. Fred's hair is growing in again, and Clairmont has been hinting that the baldness was only a hoax to get into the club. Last night we heard the old man ask Hammond to resign. Naturally Fred refused. Again this morning some words passed between them."

"Can you give me an idea of what they were?" Conners's eyes bored Ned through and through.

"They had about finished breakfast when I sat down." Ned measured his words carefully. "I heard Fred say, 'Even if you are president of the club, you can't make me resign, and if you don't hand it over to me by noon you'll find out what I'll do.' The major got up, bent over Fred's chair and whispered something. The boy's face changed color. 'That's a lie, damn you,' he said. Clairmont laughed and went out. I saw him going through the shrubbery toward the golf course."

Conners nodded understandingly. "Show me where the body was found," he said brusquely.

Ned and the detective walked quickly up the path. With Conners's permission I followed more slowly.

They paused beside the bush where the body of Major Clairmont had been found. The ground was damp and the grass on either side trampled. A person wearing a broad-heeled shoe with a clip on the inner side of the right heel had walked along the edge of the path, stepping more than half the time on the grass.

Terry Conners bent his body almost double examining the damp ground. Notwithstanding his heavy frame, he moved lightly over the grass, scrutinizing the blades with microscopic care. He busied himself for a few minutes with a tape line; then without saying a word started back to the clubhouse.

"Assemble the servants, gardeners, and every paid person on the premises." He addressed his assistant, Danvers. Danvers, who had hitherto taken no part in the activities, rose quietly and without glancing to either the right or left disappeared.

It was perhaps half an hour before the fifteen persons in the employ of the B. H. M. Club were ranged in a row on either side of the red brick fireplace in the long living-room.

Carefully Conners questioned each and examined the soles of all the shoes. Almost regretfully, it seemed to me, he dismissed them with "That is all, but you are under the eye of the law still. The men who work outside will be watched; those of you who belong indoors will still stay in pairs. I'm going to land the murderer of Major Clairmont before the sun sets to-day." With a wave of his hand he motioned them out. He turned to Ned Benson and myself. "Before I go any farther I want to be taken to the room of Fred Hammond."

"It is my room, too," I put in quickly. "I haven't been there lately, though."

The detective looked at me sharply. "Where have you been?"

"In Japan for the past six months."

"When did you come back?"

"This morning on the eight o'clock 'special,'" I answered.

"The body was found between eight and eight-thirty, was it not?" he spoke to Ned.

Benson nodded. I gasped: "God, man, you don't think I had——"

He raised his hand and snapped: "I think everything and nothing in cases like this. You seem strangely interested. Come on, I'm keeping my eye on everybody just now."

The linen closet at the end of the broad carpeted hall on the second floor was opposite the room occupied by my cousin and myself. Hardly had we reached the door when Sugamanta sprang up ghost-like from nowhere, and beside him was Heck.

Conners wheeled quickly. "Well?" he said sharply.

The Japanese stammered: "I—I—I thought you might want us."

"Huh!" Conners eyed him. "Shows there's something in telepathy. I had just decided to send for you. Come in."

He shut the door behind us. The room was large and sunny. On the telephone table between the two beds a package of cigarettes leaned against a book on "Military Architecture." There were various toilet articles on top of a chiffonier, besides a blue pencil, a pocket compass, and a plumb line.

Conners looked them over without comment. He opened the two closets, one on either side of the lavatory. The first was mine; it was practically empty. The other contained clothing, a large choice, proclaiming the one extravagance of my cousin. Across the end of the closet ran a wide shelf, and on it, carefully treed, stood several pairs of shoes. They were broad-heeled, round-toed and finely made. Conners bent down and took up one after another, examining the right heel of each. His eyes grew narrower and narrower. He took three or four measurements with a tape, and once his lips opened, emitting a sort of whistle.

Closing the door of the closet, he addressed Sugamanta, who had been standing by the window, shifting his weight from one foot to the other. "I'm ready now; what is it you want to tell me?"

Sugamanta's lips twitched. "I—I—why——" he stammered.

"You know Fred Hammond, and you knew the major, did you not?"

Sugamanta nodded.

"You liked the major the best of all the club men, did you not?"

"I'm friendly with them all."

"Certainly, I understand, but I'm here to run down the murderer of Major Clairmont. Your duty is to help me. Now, what is it you want to tell me about Hammond?"

The reiterated sentence at last brought a result. Sugamanta dropped his voice to almost a whisper. "I—I—I happen to know that there has been bad blood between them for some time."

"How did you find it out?"

"Why, sir, my room opens off the writing room on the first floor. One night about a month ago I heard them quarreling. Hammond called the major a liar and said, 'I can fix you for that.' The major said, 'If you do, you'll hang for it.' Hammond swore and left the room."

"Was that all you heard?"

"All until this morning I heard the major say to Hammond, 'You'd better be careful how you accuse me.' They were going into the dining-room; I was in the hall. I saw Hammond follow the major out toward the golf links. That is all, sir."

Terry nodded. "You may go, but don't say a word about this to any one else, not even if the police question you," he cautioned. "Remember, there's a knot tied in your tongue,

and in yours, too," he said to Heck. They both looked half fearfully at the big detective and started out. "Wait," Conners commanded. "You two stay together, understand; stay together till I'm through here. Now go." The ticking of the tall clock in the hall was the only audible sound for a few minutes, while Terry Conners sat and thought. Suddenly he asked: "How tall is Fred Hammond?"

"About six feet," Ned and I replied almost in unison.

He stood up, and with a pronounced movement of his head indicated that we were to follow him.

Fred Hammond sat on one side of a long table in the smoking-room.

The "star of the force" did not mince matters; he walked over to Fred and said abruptly: "I'm Detective Terry Conners; take off your shoes!"

His tones grated on my nerves, for I sensed in them a note of satisfaction. I went hot and cold in turn when I saw my cousin unlace his left shoe, then his right and hand them both to the big man.

Conners turned the shoes sole up on the table. He measured them with his tape. "I notice that your right shoe has a peculiar heel clip on it," he said.

Fred cleared his throat nervously, nodded and bit off a piece of his cigar. Terry reached into his pocket, took out two envelopes, a microscope and a small camel-hair brush. Carefully and slowly he moved the glass across the heel and sole of each shoe. Then as carefully he brushed a little fine soil from between the upper and the sole of the left shoe. In the same self-satisfied manner, with the tip of the blade of his pocket knife he removed a bit of black earth from under the edge of the heel clip on the right shoe. Opening two envelopes, he emptied out two little piles samples of earth which he had taken from the path and shrubbery.

After a few moments of close scrutiny he tapped Fred's shoulder, saying: "Tell me, Hammond, what you and the major were at logger-heads about."

"Who said we were?" Fred asked almost defiantly.

"Never mind who said so. I'm here to ferret out this crime. I know that you and the old man quarreled a month ago last night and again this morning. I know you threatened him. I've seen the footprints where his body was found; they were made by a person wearing a round-toed shoe with a clip on the right heel. The samples of dirt I took from your shoes and the samples I got out there are identical. How can you explain that?

"You left the clubhouse this morning a few minutes after the major did. You walked along the same path, did you not?"

Fred's eyes traveled from the detective to Benson and myself, then back again. He kept wetting his lips as though they were parched. Slowly he answered: "Yes."

Terry's voice became as smooth as silk. "And you overtook Major Clairmont where the rhododendrons grow the thickest?"

Fred crossed and uncrossed his shoeless feet. He looked in a state of almost inarticulate fright. "I passed him just around the first bend." He paused and nervously brushed back his hair with both hands.

"The major was struck from behind with a piece of lead pipe about fourteen inches long. It has been found in the shrubbery, and at that identical spot your footprints leave the path."

"Look here," Fred said hoarsely, getting control of himself. "I'm not the sort of a man to kill another simply because he was jealous of me. I believe he was a fraud and a thief; some papers of mine are missing; I'm almost sure that he took them."

"Indeed"—Conners's voice was bitingly sarcastic—"I want to know where you went, what you did and who you saw after you passed the major."

Fred's face whitened again. He hesitated an instant. "I—why, I walked down to the pond. No one saw me. I didn't meet any one."

Conners smiled sneeringly. "Your unsupported word is no good, Hammand. I have the dope on you. I've tracked down men who were shrewd. Get that—shrewd. This is raw. You and the major quarrel; you accuse him of stealing; you threaten him; your footprints are found near the spot where the body lay. You are tall; only a tall man could have killed him from that distance with a fourteen-inch length of pipe. You can't give a plausible

explanation of where you were this morning, so, Fred Hammond, I arrest you for the murder of Major Henry Clairmont, United States Navy."

Fred shrank back in the chair and stared at the detective.

"Stand up," commanded Terry, producing a pair of handcuffs. "Stand up."

At that moment the door opened and John Stanford entered. He looked at the steel bracelets on Fred's wrists and exclaimed:

"What in hell does this mean?"

Conners smiled stiffly. "It means," he said harshly, "that I have the murderer of Major Clairmont."

Stanword lifted one of his long hands. "Wait, Conners, wait; have you searched every person in the house?"

"No." Conners's tone was scornful. "No, but I've questioned them and looked at the soles of all the shoes. Hammond wears the shoe of the man who killed the major. No use searching any one. It was not robbery; there was not a valuable taken from the body."

Stanford shrugged. "I know you are a devilish clever fellow, Conners, and that you play the game shrewdly, but just let me have a few words with you before you take Fred away."

They crossed to the open window, and for a period of ten minutes the attorney talked to the detective. When they came back I saw a gleam of contempt in Terry Conners's eyes and heard the unmistakable sound of antagonism in his voice as he said: "In order that your friend may be satisfied that I've no personal grudge against you, Hammond, I'm going to give him a chance to prove that I've made a mistake." He pressed the button. "Haynes," he said when the head steward appeared, "will you tell Danvers to recall every one of the employees? Bring them in here."

When the group of paid help was again assembled Conners ranged them in one long line out in the middle of the room.

There was something almost tragic in the voice of John Stanford as he began his questioning.

Sugamanta, the trim built Japanese, stood at the far end of the line and near the big open window overlooking the tennis court. Something in his manner attracted my attention.

I saw him fumble at the front of his white house jacket. In an instant I grew alarmed. His expression changed. A knife gleamed. He made a couple of quick strokes across his abdomen and fell to the floor.

Inside his shirt were found Fred Hammond's plans of the coast defense of San Filipe Island, a packet of bills amounting to five thousand dollars was in a folder with "H. C. U. S. A." engraved on it, and credentials from Japan, proving beyond a doubt that Sugamanta Haro was an officer in the Japanese army.

Terry Conners had fallen down hard, but he was game. He turned to John Stanford with a smile. "I have absolutely nothing to say, Stanford, except this: You have beaten me. Now tell me why, in spite of all the evidence I've gathered against Hammond, you insisted on the examination?"

"Take off those things." Stanford indicated the handcuffs on Fred's wrists. "Take them off and I'll tell you."

Conners dropped the steel rings back in his pocket, handed Hammond his shoes, and with a grin brushed the dirt evidence into the waste basket. "Ready," he said.

John Stanford nodded approvingly. "I'm no detective, Conners, but in my law work I've learned never to hang a tomcat for eating the canary on circumstantial evidence, not even if he has feathers sticking in his whiskers. Sugamanta's military walk, his perfect English, his intense interest in military people and affairs always have made me wonder. I often saw him and Major Clairmont together. Yesterday I watched him looking at different groups of islands on the big wall map in the office. I knew that the major was hard pressed for money, I knew that Fred's plans had been stolen, and so I've proven——"

Conners interrupted. "And so you think you've proven that Sugamanta paid the major five thousand dollars for Hammond's plans of coast defense and then killed the major to get the money back, is that it?"

Stanford answered: "Yes."

"Not especially clever," said Conners. "If I'd known half that much I'd directed his arrest from my office, and not bothered about coming out here at all."

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by Chas. F. Oursler.
13. "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by Chas. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by Redfield Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28. "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29. "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by C. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign on the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. H. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
77 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by Wm. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89. "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Last Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "A Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by Bulah Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by Beulah Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
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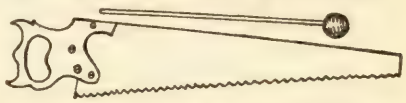

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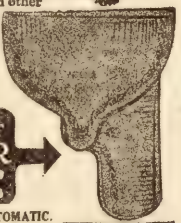

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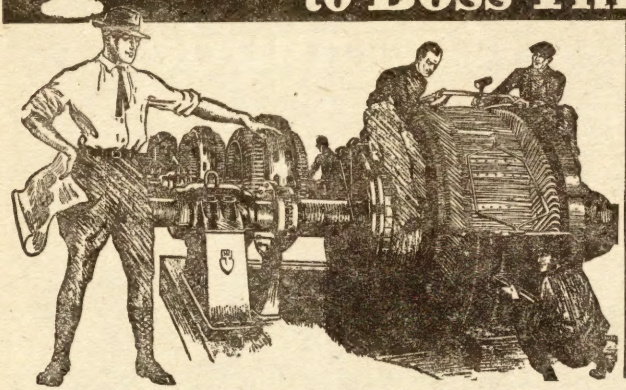

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